

Old Sleuth Library

OLD SLEUTH IN PHILADELPHIA.
BY "OLD SLEUTH."

A SERIES OF THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES EVER PUBLISHED.

No. 78.

{ SINGLE
NUMBER. }

GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS, PUBLISHERS,
Nos. 17 to 27 VANDEWATER STREET, NEW YORK.

{ PRICE
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Vol. IV.

Old Sleuth Library, Issued Quarterly. — By Subscription, Twenty-five Cents per Annum.
Entered at the Post Office at New York at Second Class Rates. — Sept. 18, 1897.
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—OR—

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Old Sleuth's hand flew up, and he grabbed a noose that had been deftly thrown over his head.

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CHAPTER I.

"*She appears to be dead, but, as I live, I believe she lives!*"

It was in the midst of strange surroundings, and under the most thrilling conditions, that the above words fell from the lips of Old Sleuth—the real, genuine Old Sleuth, the man whose calm judgment, shrewdness, address, and courage had carried him through so many wonderful adventures.

The hour was midnight; the detective was an interloper. He had surreptitiously entered a mansion in the great city of Philadelphia, and it was *duty* that led him to invade that palatial residence at such an hour.

The detective stood in a gorgeously furnished apartment beside a handsome rosewood coffin. Deftly and silently he had removed the head-piece, and under the dim light shed from a half-turned chandelier was revealed the calm, peaceful face of a beautiful young girl.

The detective held in his hand a photograph upon which was pictured semblances of a youthful pair—a young gentleman and lady. The former was handsome, as revealed by the picture; the latter strikingly, ay, wonderfully beautiful.

At the first glance, the detective had supposed he was gazing upon a corpse, the rigid remains of the victim of a foul assassination; but as he gazed, a strange suspicion crossed his mind.

Old Sleuth had often gazed upon the faces of the dead, and upon his powerful memory was impressed all the ghostly peculiarities attendant upon death; but as he gazed upon the still and beautiful face, it came to him that some of the most striking indices of death were lacking in the face before him.

It was a terrible moment, and a frightful contingency was presented. There lay in the circumstances a mystery, a horror deeper than any that had come under his observation during all the years that he had been unraveling dark crimes.

A moment the detective stood contemplating the face, then from his pocket he drew a photograph, and compared the pictured face with the one in the coffin, and it was while making the comparison that, in a low tone, he uttered the words with which we open our narrative.

Certain business had called Sleuth to Philadelphia, and one of the daily journals had mentioned his name in connection with a case which was before the courts.

The detective had completed his business, and was about ready to return to New York, when an incident occurred that caused him to remain, and resulted in his becoming an actor in one of the darkest dramas of the nineteenth century.

The detective was seated upon a bench in a public park; it was after dark, but still early in the evening. Our hero had been seated some time, when a lady dressed in black and heavily veiled walked along the path near which he was sitting.

The veiled woman did not appear to observe the presence of the detective, and she threw herself upon a bench but a few feet distant from where the old hero of many wonderful adventures sat.

The detective's curiosity would have been but passing were it not that upon the instant he observed that the woman was acting in a very singular manner. She muttered and threw her arms around wildly, and showed every sign of excessive and violent agitation. Suddenly the detective heard her exclaim:

"I will do it!" and an instant later, after her nervous hands had been passed under her veil, she ejaculated: "Brave heart! it is done! and now may my blood atone for my crime!"

The detective sprung toward her, tore aside the veil, and with a thrill or horror realized that he was gazing upon the dead.

The tragedy explained itself; the woman had taken some powerful drug, its fatal effects had been instantaneous; she had expired in a few seconds after having taken the deadly draught.

As a rule, the detective was a quick thinker, and knew just how to act at once under startling emergencies; but for once in his life he was at fault. Should he give an alarm, or should he steal away and let some other chance passer-by give notice of the horror?

The detective had just decided upon the latter course, when he observed that a note was clutched in the fast-stiffening hand of the suicide.

It was but the work of an instant to possess himself of the note, which he took from the grasp of the dead; then he drew his dark-lantern and flashed its sharp rays upon the face, which had been hidden by the veil, and the mystery was deepened upon discovering that the self-murderess was a beautiful mulatto woman.

Just one moment the detective stood and gazed, intending to fix the appearance of the dead upon his memory, when he heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

The detective walked away but a short distance, when he came to a halt, and awaited the inevitable *dénouement*.

He was not compelled to wait long. He had just placed the note he had wrested from the grip of the dead in his pocket, when there rang out upon the night air a shrill and terrified shriek.

The detective understood the scream upon returning a short distance and beholding a lady and gentleman standing over the body of the suicide.

A few moments later and a general alarm was given, a stretcher was procured, and the suicide's body was carried to the police-station.

The detective went to the station, and saw that the dead woman had been handsomely dressed and possessed of rich jewelry.

"Another unfortunate," was his mental comment, as he left the station.

Sleuth proceeded to his hotel, and, having nothing better to do, glanced at the missive.

The note ran as follows:

"Whoever reads this note will communicate with the police. A terrible crime may yet be prevented, an innocent life saved."

The note proceeded and gave directions as to where the announced crime was in progress, and ended as follows:

"I die by my own hand, an atonement for my part in the foulest crime ever perpetrated by human fiends!"

Had Sleuth found the note upon the street, or had it been sent to him, he would have given it no heed; but the tragic circumstances under which he had secured it made every word a revelation—a warning written in lines of blood.

The detective went to the police-station to learn if the body had been identified. The information received was to the effect that the dead woman had not been recognized, and the detectives and other officials had reached the same conclusion concerning the tragedy as originally conceived by our hero.

Sleuth refrained from giving information, and at once proceeded to the vicinity described in the missive as the place where the crime was, as declared, about to be perpetrated.

The detective went very deliberately to work, as he always did. He was not a man to rush matters. He found the house to be an old-fashioned mansion—a building evidently erected a long time prior to the Revolution—and undoubtedly always had been, as it certainly appeared to be at the moment, the abode of wealth and culture.

The detective's first move was to study how he could gain a surreptitious entrance into the mansion.

He entered the grounds and walked around the place until he was brought to a stand by being confronted by an immense dog—a ferocious-looking Siberian blood-hound.

A man with less nerve and courage than the old detective would have been taken all aback, but Sleuth was not any more disturbed than he would have been had the fierce-looking animal been a lame rabbit.

The hound did not, however, afford the detective much time for consideration. He uttered a low, savage growl, followed by a spasmodic bark, then he made a leap. The next instant the animal went rolling over and over like a circus clown turning side hand-springs.

The detective did not wait for the animal to make a second attack, but followed him up and dealt him several powerful blows, until the dog lay still.

Several times the detective passed round the house, making a close and critical study. He was on a wild-goose chase, as it might appear; his cue had come from the heart of a thrilling tragedy.

At length the detective ascended the rear stoop, and in a few moments, through methods of his own, he succeeded in opening the door.

Once in the house, our hero found himself in darkness, and he drew forth his masked-lantern, and by aid of its sharp light made his way to the parlor.

Upon entering the parlor, having forced the lock, a sight met his gaze which caused him to stand a few moments and contemplate his surroundings.

The furniture in the room was old, but rich. On the walls hung valuable paintings, and scattered about the room on every hand were bric à-brac and works of art, indicative of a home of taste, culture, and wealth.

The detective calmly studied all the surroundings, as stated, and left until the last a critical examination of the most startling object in the parlor.

Upon trestles rested a coffin, and partly over the latter was thrown a black pall.

Old Sleuth stood for a long time revolving in his mind several plans, and at the same time thinking over the strange probabilities.

There were certain suggestions in the note he had taken from the grasp of the dead which served as a guide to a particular theory, and as he stood there he felt assured that the casket contained the corpse of a victim of a foul murder.

On a table in the parlor lay a richly embossed photograph album.

The detective opened the book and turned over the pages, carefully examining the many pictures which it contained. His eyes at length rested upon a photograph of two young people taken together on one card—a gentleman and lady.

The former was the semblance of a remarkably handsome man, and the second was the picture of a beautiful girl.

The faces bore a certain resemblance to each other, and the detective in his mind pronounced them brother and sister; and, later on, his surprise was great when the suggestion arose that they were murdered and murderer.

Old Sleuth, strangely enough, removed the picture; we say strangely, simply because it was a singular fact that from among all the photographs he should select that particular one.

Having secured the picture, he crossed the room, and with appliances that he had with him he removed the head-piece of the casket, and his eyes rested upon a lovely corpse, the form of her who had, beyond question, been the original of one of the faces in the photograph.

CHAPTER II.

As intimated in the opening paragraph of our story, at a first glance the detective thought he was gazing upon the face of the dead, but an instant later a weird and most startling suspicion arose in his mind, and he gave utterance to the exclamation with which we open our story.

The words had just fallen from his lips, and he still stood over the coffin, comparing the face upon the photograph with the face

of the occupant of the casket, when he became conscious that some one had entered the room.

Up to the moment indicated he had observed no signs of a living soul in the house, but in glancing momentarily half round, he became aware, as stated, of the presence of another in the room.

The detective did not move, nor by the slightest sign indicate his discovery. He was a man of iron nerve, and it was his coolness and courage that had made him in some respects the greatest detective that ever lived.

While the detective had been busy looking over the album, previous to his opening of the coffin, a living face had been thrust partly through the hangings which separated the room where the corpse lay from an adjoining apartment.

It was the face of a woman, and thrilling agitation, surprise, and amazement were expressed upon her sharply cut features, as, like a basilisk, she stood and watched the motions of the man who had so boldly forced himself into the house.

The woman did not scream or attempt to give an alarm; she only stood and watched until she saw the man select the particular photograph from the album and cross the room toward the pall-covered casket; then she silently stole away from the hangings and passed from the room into the hall.

Cautiously and noiselessly she ascended the stairs to a third-story room, which she entered without knocking.

Seated in a large chair, with his head thrown back, and fast asleep, was a colored man of gigantic proportions, attired in the dress-suit of a high-toned waiter.

The woman laid her hand on the sleeping negro's arm, and the man awoke. Her pale face shone in striking contrast to the dark features of the negro as she brought her head close to his ear, and whispered:

"We are in peril! There is a man down-stairs—a stranger—studying the face of the dead!"

The negro had been sound asleep, and when first aroused his faculties appeared dull, but when he heard the news imparted by the trembling woman, a startling change came over his face. His black face assumed a ferocious expression, and his eyes gleamed like the orbs of an angered dog or cat.

"A man down in the parlor?" he said.

"Yes."

"What is he doing?"

"He took the photograph of Charles and Alice from the album, and crossed the room and commenced to remove the head-piece from the coffin, and then I hastened to arouse you."

A moment the giant negro was thoughtful, but after an interval he said:

"How did he get into the house?"

"I do not know."

"How did you chance to discover his presence?"

"I was in the back parlor. I had been asleep. I awoke, and went to look in the front room, and saw him there."

"Did you scream or give any intimation of your knowledge of his presence?"

"No."

"Was the parlor door locked?"

"I know the door was locked on the inside, and I found him in the room."

"Madame," said the negro, "Parthenia has fulfilled her threat!"

"What do you mean?"

"She has told her tale to the authorities. *She has ruined our master!*"

"No, no! She has told our secret to but one person, and that person is down-stairs now!"

"Why do you think she has told her tale to but one person?"

"The regular police would not *steal* into the house, they would have come openly. But one thing is certain—that man down-stairs has a clew. He has come here with a purpose and on information. We are in deadly peril; but we can save ourselves."

"How?"

"It is no time to mince words. You must kill that man down in the parlor—throttle him, choke him to death—*murder him!*"

"I will!" said the negro; and there was murder in his eyes as he rose from the chair and started for the door leading from the room, followed by the woman.

As our story progresses, our readers will learn all the facts which led up to the tragic incidents we have narrated.

Meantime, the steady old detective had been making a close examination, and a sad look settled upon his face upon beholding the result of certain experiments he had made.

The detective had just reached the conclusion that it was really a corpse, when he became aware of the presence of another person in the room.

As intimated previously, the detective gave no sign. He was ready and conscious that some one was stealing toward him from behind.

No man ever lived who possessed a finer sense of hearing than Old Sleuth, and his natural intuition was wonderful.

The negro, with murder in his eye and the strength of a giant in his arms, was just reaching forward to grasp the intruder, when Old Sleuth turned round.

The detective held a cocked revolver in his hand, and as he thrust the weapon under the negro's nose, he said in the calmest tones:

"Didn't you see it, old man?"

The negro recoiled as from the swaying head of an excited cobra.

At the same instant Sleuth's glance fell upon the pale, excited face of the woman, as, ghost-like, it appeared between the curtain hangings.

In a moment the negro recovered from his first set-back, and demanded:

"What are you doing here? Who are you?"
 "I am Carl the Avenger! I am here as a threatening Nemesis!" came the singular reply.
 "You are a thief! You are here to rob the dead! I shall summon the police!"
 "Do so."
 The woman stepped into the room. Her form was trembling with passion; her eyes blazed with anger, and in deep-toned accents she demanded:
 "Who are you? What do you purpose?"
 "Madame, I have told you who I am."
 "Victor," cried the woman, "he is an assassin—a robber! Kill him!"
 The huge negro did not wait to be urged. With all his gigantic strength he threw himself upon the detective, and a terrible struggle followed.
 Sleuth was not an old man; he was just in his prime, and possessed one of the most magnificent physiques it is possible for man to be blessed with.
 Sleuth shook himself free from the villain's grasp, and as the fellow made a dash forward, our hero let fly and dealt him a blow which sent him reeling off his feet.
 The woman at the same instant sprang forward with a gleaming stiletto in her hand, but Sleuth avoided the thrust and knocked the weapon from her grasp.
 The negro meantime had gained his feet, and he too drew a knife and made a dash at the detective, when the reliable old locust which had resounded upon so many heads was brought into play.
 One blow knocked the knife from the black assassin's grasp, and a second blow landed upon his woolly head.
 Sleuth meant business when he struck the last blow, and it was dealt with sufficient force to drop a bull, and the negro dropped.
 Our hero had noted all that he required for the time being, and without a word of explanation he glided from the room and passed from the house.
 The detective made his way back to the hotel, and once in his room he sat down to think over the exciting incidents through which he had passed.
 One fact he had demonstrated beyond all question. He had really fallen upon the well-wrought threads of a deep and terrible crime, and he determined to investigate the strange incidents to the very bottom.
 Upon the morning following the startling incidents we have described, the detective read the papers containing an account of the dark tragedy that had occurred in the park.
 No clew as to the identity of the woman had been discovered, and the police adhered to their theory that the woman was a poor, despairing unfortunate who, in a moment of remorse, had taken her own life.
 Our hero went to the vicinity of the house he had entered upon the previous night. There was no sign of a funeral; all was quiet and natural about the place.
 The detective "moused" around, looking for some one to question, and he did not have long to wait. A man came along, and seeing our hero watching the house, he asked:
 "Have you ever had the small pox, neighbor?"
 "No," answered Sleuth.
 "Then you had better get away from here. They've just had a case in that mansion, and the body was only carried out an hour ago."
 The detective discovered that the man who had warned him was one of those knowing chaps who enjoy a good gossip above a meal.
 "Who lives in that house?"
 "That house was the property of Mr. Brutone, a man who at one time was a great merchant, but during the last twenty years of his life he became a great miser. When he died it was rumored that he left a greater fortune than was ever bequeathed before in the State of Pennsylvania."
 "He made a will, eh?"
 "Yes, he made a will, and George Bindal is a lucky man. I tell you, neighbor, it's strange how things happen, but this morning the remaining direct heir was carried out of that house a putrid corpse, and the great fortune goes into the possession of aliens and strangers. George Bindal was only a step-son of old Brutone, and a foreigner at that—a Spaniard or Italian, I reckon."
 "To whom was the property originally left, my friend?"
 "To a niece and nephew of old Brutone—two of the loveliest people you ever heard or read about in all your life."
 "They were brother and sister?"
 "No; they were cousins. Charles Brutone was the only son of an only brother, and Alice Fairfax was the only daughter of an only sister. The cousins were to be married, in accordance with the dying wishes of the old man; but now they are both gone, George Bindal, the step-son, who was the residuary legatee, comes in for the whole estate."
 "How old a man is this George Bindal?"
 "A man about forty; and, between you and me, he is a bad man. I don't like him or any of his family. He looks like the devil, and I believe he is one."
 The man approached close to Sleuth, and after glancing around furtively, said in an undertone:
 "Between you and me, there ought to be some regular investigation. There is a mystery attending the death of those two young people."
 "They are both dead?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "How long has the young man been dead?"
 "About three weeks."
 "What was the cause of his death?"
 "He was reported to have died of small-pox—the same disease

that carried off the young lady; and there is one thing I do not understand, the young lady did not know that her cousin and affianced was dead."
 The mystery was growing darker and deeper.
 "How long has Mr. Brutone been dead?"
 "About two years."
 "And he left his money to his nephew and niece?"
 "Yes."
 "How is it you chance to know the terms of the will?"
 "My son is a clerk with the lawyer who drew up the will."
 "What is the lawyer's name?"
 The man gave the name, and Old Sleuth made a note.
 Our hero observed that his informant was evidently a man in poor circumstances and exhibited a liking for liquor, and he invited the man to join him in a neighboring restaurant.
 Once in the restaurant, Sleuth asked the man a great many questions, and elicited many strange and startling facts, which will be disclosed as our narrative progresses. The man asked:
 "What makes you so particular about learning all about that family?"
 "Oh, I'm a man of leisure, and I've a fondness for listening to strange stories."
 Among other strange statements, the man said that the mansion had been quarantined for five weeks; no one but the physician had entered the house, and the funeral of the young man had been private. His death was announced one day and the burial took place upon the following morning.
 "When was the death of the young lady announced?"
 "Last evening."
 "And the burial took place this morning?"
 "Yes."
 "Where was the girl buried?"
 The man told the name of the cemetery.
 "Who attended the funeral?"
 "George Bindal and a man who, I think, was the doctor."
 As the man uttered the last remark, an unexpected, exciting incident occurred.
 Sleuth was amazed at all he had heard. His clear mind suggested one of the most cunning and diabolical crimes of the nineteenth century.
 The announcement that the young people died of small-pox showed how cunning was the scheme. Such a death permitted an immediate burial, and would keep all inquirers from the house.
 Our hero knew that the young girl had not died a victim to the horrible disease. He had stood over the coffin and gazed upon her calm, pure, dead face, beautiful and unmarred even in death, and the fact was established that a deep and cunning fraud had been practiced.
 The man who had been the detective's informant had just mentioned the word "doctor," when a man of singular appearance entered the restaurant, and our hero's companion at once ejaculated in a low, startled tone:
 "There he is!"
 "Who?" asked Sleuth.
 "The doctor."
 Our hero glanced at the man, and at once read him through and through. Every lineament of the doctor's face was expressive, to a man of Sleuth's training, experience, and natural shrewdness, of villainy.
 Our hero realized that he was gazing upon the face of a man capable of any crime.
 The doctor was a foreigner. Our hero could not pronounce his exact nationality, but suspected that he fellow was either a half-breed West Indian or an Arab. One thing was certain—he was not a European or an American, but he was a man of courage, intellect, and a villain.
 The doctor only remained a few moments. He merely entered the restaurant to obtain a glass of seltzer water, which he drank and departed.
 "What is the doctor's name?"
 "Doctor Wadji."
 "What countryman is he?"
 "He claims to have been born in India of Italian parents."
 "Are you acquainted with him?"
 "No; but I know of him. He keeps a little herb and drug store in the lower part of the city."
 Old Sleuth was gradually picking up some very startling information.
 "Where are the relatives of the Brutones?"
 "They had no relatives; and that is the reason the old man made his step-son the residuary legatee and guardian of the children."
 "Is George Bindal's mother living?"
 "No; she has been dead ten years."
 "And did Bindal live with his step-father?"
 "Yes."
 "Did the nephew and niece live with him?"
 "No."
 "How long did they live with Bindal?"
 "About two years."
 "What were the ages of the nephew and niece?"
 "They were both minors."
 "You say your son is a clerk with the lawyer who drew up the will?"
 "He was a clerk with him."
 "He is not with the lawyer now?"
 "Mr. Chamberlain—the lawyer—is dead."
 "Aha!" muttered Sleuth. "I see. How long has Mr. Chamberlain been dead?"
 "About six months."
 "Where is your son?"
 "He has gone to New York, and has opened a law office there."

The detective noted the name and address of the young lawyer. "Do you know where the girl was buried?" asked Sleuth.

"Yes; she was placed in the family vault."

Sleuth held a further conversation with the man, and arranged for another meeting with him.

The man could not understand the detective's interest in the affair, but a five-dollar bill made him a happy man.

Our hero proceeded direct to the cemetery, and had little difficulty in locating the vault. He made a close examination, and as he walked away, he muttered:

"Ah! I see what I shall need, and to-night I will know more of this horror!"

The detective was leaving the vicinity, when he met a man walking along one of the cemetery paths, and two discoveries were made by Sleuth at the same instant.

In the first place, he detected at a glance that the man was in disguise. There was something very suspicious in the latter fact. The second discovery was the important intelligence that the man had seen the detective and had been watching his movements.

The detective kept upon his way and discovered that the man was following him. Such were the quick, observative powers of Sleuth that he had identified his man before he had played his dodge-follow game five minutes.

The discovery of the man's identity led to very strange suggestions, and as the detective walked along, he muttered:

"Ah! the game is not played out yet. That man has a purpose in loitering around that tomb, and ere another day dawns I will know what his real purpose is, or I'll eat my hat!"

The detective wandered around the cemetery for some time. His movements were intended as a draw-off. The shadow followed him, but not in such a manner as would have attracted the attention of a person possessed of less experience than the detective.

Sleuth at length left the cemetery, and after a time learned that the shadow had fallen off from the pursuit.

Returning to his hotel, the "quiet man in black," as our hero was sometimes designated, began making certain preparations. He had resolved upon a ghostly excursion. He was determined to once more gaze upon the beautiful face of the victim, as he believed, of a foul murder.

About nine o'clock in the evening he started forth, and his course was toward the cemetery he had been traversing at an earlier hour.

The detective reached the vault where the Brutone family were entombed, and it did not take him long to open the door leading into the damp, chill charnel house.

Once in the place, the detective slid the mask of his lantern, and flashed the light around amidst the ghastly objects on every side.

In a moment his glance settled upon the casket he had seen in the parlor of the Brutone mansion. Deftly he removed the head-lid, and a startling discovery followed.

The coffin was empty!

CHAPTER III.

No exclamation of amazement fell from the detective's lips. He merely uttered in calm tones:

"Just as I expected. By all that's strange and mysterious, I swear that girl was living, after all! My first conclusion was correct, and now I must find the living; it was a short run for the dead."

The detective suddenly uttered an exclamation, as though a new idea had suddenly occurred to him.

He cast his keen eyes around, and soon his glance rested upon a second coffin which was comparatively new.

The detective opened the second coffin, and again he made a remarkable discovery—the second coffin was empty.

Again Sleuth stood and pondered.

"I do not understand it," he muttered. "Why have they removed both bodies—can both be living?"

The question was a momentous one; the detective could not discern at the moment why either should have been spared.

There was no positive evidence that either was living, but the detective chose to take the view that the girl was certainly alive.

It had been given out that both had died of small-pox, and the removal of the bodies might have been to guard against the discovery of that particular fraud; indeed, the removal might have been to cover the evidence of two foul murders.

Sleuth weighed well all the probabilities, and, as stated, chose to believe that at least one of the victims lived, and possibly both.

He was a man who could weigh probabilities beyond ordinary minds; nothing escaped his consideration when calculating the chances of some deep mystery.

"All right; I know what to do now," he muttered; and with the remark a wonderful change came over his face.

Quick as a flash he seized his dark-lantern, slid the mask, drew his club, and waited with bated breath.

The bold man had made the discovery that he was not alone. He became conscious of the presence of some one near the entrance leading from the vault.

A moment passed, and all was still, when he heard a movement.

The detective was forced to the conclusion that he had been watched and followed.

To be discovered meant death.

The authors of the scheme he was piping could not afford to have the fact go abroad that a mock funeral had been held over two empty coffins, after having given out the information that there had been two deaths.

The detective knew that whispering was going on, but he could not distinguish what was being said.

He stepped close to the entrance, and heard a man say in a gentle whisper:

"Can you see him?"

"How can I see him in the dark?"

The detective discerned that two men were waiting for him to come out. He would willingly have gone out, but he desired to catch on to a little more of the dialogue.

"Can't you make out where he stands?"

"I can."

"Then let drive; it's the best plan for settling the job. If we drop him, we can close the vault, and there'll be no discovery until the next funeral, and by that time we can have him boxed without a funeral."

The man was inclined to be facetious. Sleuth was amused; but he had no idea of being boxed so unceremoniously.

In answer to the man's suggestion his companion said:

"It doesn't make any difference where we drop him; we can box him all the same; there's an empty coffin inside."

Our readers will take note that the two men were close to each other, and spoke in so low a tone that they did not believe it possible they could be overheard eighteen inches distant.

They knew very well they had their man safe enough, and that he could pass out only through the one exit from the tomb.

"This won't do," said one of the men. "We can't wait here."

"What shall we do?"

"You have a dark-lantern?"

"Yes."

"Slide the mask."

"And what then?"

"Flash your light inside; I will stand with a cocked brace, and in about two minutes the man will be as dead as the old chap who had the vault built."

The detective had taken the bearings of the vault, and he changed his position.

A moment, and the light flashed athwart the gloom in the vault; but its bright ray failed to reveal the detective; while on the other hand, Sleuth had a dead bead on both men, had he seen fit to avail himself of his advantage.

Our hero, as our readers well know, was not a blood-thirsty man. He never took life when he could avoid it, and it was only in the extreme moment that he ever brought his weapons into play.

When Old Sleuth fired, somebody went down.

He was one of the steadiest shots in America, and his weapons were always in perfect order.

The men seemed to be bothered upon not seeing their intended victim, and yet at the very moment the detective was not more than thirty-six inches distant from the man who held the lantern.

"Hang it!" said one of them, "where has he gone?"

"He must be in there. He couldn't have come out," said the man who held the revolver.

"He is not there, and there must be some other exit from the tomb."

"No; he is there! Go in!"

The man hesitated a moment, and then said:

"You step in and I will hold the light."

Here followed a moment's delay. Neither man appeared to have the courage to step into the vault.

The man who held the pistol stepped into the vault. He advanced one step, when suddenly he went sprawling, and a shriek fell from his lips as he went down from a powerful blow dealt by Old Sleuth.

Sleuth stood still for a moment, and then stepped into the opening of the vault.

The man who held the light had fled, leaving his comrade to meet the peril.

The detective drew his own lantern, and shut to the great iron door opening from the vault. He then flashed his light on the prostrate figure of the fellow he had downed.

The wounded man lay still, as motionless as though he were dead. Sleuth advanced, and bent over him, when the fellow, who was only playing possum, attempted to level his pistol. The weapon was kicked from his hand, and he lay at the mercy of the detective.

Our hero examined the man closely. The fellow was not an European, an Indian, or a negro; and yet his complexion was dark and tawny, and his eyes glittered like the orbs of an angry snake.

The detective placed the fellow at a glance. He was evidently an East Indian, possibly a born thug.

The dark-faced thug lay perfectly still after having been baffled in his attempt to shoot.

Sleuth passed from the vault, closed the door behind him, and slid the great bolt. As the iron bolt shot to its place, there issued a shriek from inside the tomb.

It was midnight as the detective started to walk toward the entrance to the cemetery, and he had traversed half the distance, when suddenly he felt something strike him upon the head, and the next instant, quick as a flash, Old Sleuth's hand flew up and he grabbed a noose that had been deftly thrown over his head.

Never during his whole career had he run such a desperate chance; and only one precaution which had been adopted against another peril saved his life. In the wrist of his coat he carried an adjustable knife, an arrangement of his own, and as the rope tightened about his neck the knife severed the strands.

Even in such a moment of extreme peril the detective's presence of mind did not forsake him; as he cut the noose with one hand he seized the leading line with the other, and quick as lightning slipped the noose round his boot and fell to the ground.

As the detective fell to the ground, the rope tightened around his boot. It was the tightest squeeze the detective had ever endured, but he lay perfectly still.

A few moments passed, and the tug at the long line ceased; and still the detective lay motionless until his wonderful instinct

warned him that some object was crawling toward him in a snake-like manner.

Sleuth bided his time.

The dark-skinned assassin crept to within a few feet, almost near enough to reach out and feel his victim with his extended arm; then he came to a halt and waited.

The detective lay motionless, having adjusted the murderer's death-rope so as to make it appear that it encircled his neck.

Soon the assassin moved again. He crept close to the prostrate detective, and bent over him so that his treacherous lips came close to those of our hero, and then the *dénouement* ensued.

Sleuth's strong arm suddenly encircled the man's neck. The fellow wriggled like a rabbit caught in a trap. The detective turned the fellow over, and planting his knee on his chest, asked:

"Well, Mister Man, what have you been up to this evening?"

The man trembled all over, as in a feeble tone he said:

"Me make a mistake."

"I don't think I'd make any mistake if I were to strangle you; but, hang it! you're a poor miserable heathen, and not worth killing. But mark me well, you get out of Philadelphia; if I find you in this city two days from now, I'll kill you!"

The detective rose to his feet and bid the assassin rise.

The fellow lay still, like a worm coiled on the ground.

The detective did not stamp on him. He did the other thing. He gave the rascal a kick, just where kicks are usually dealt, and the fellow turned over, and in an instant was on his feet. As he rose, the detective gave him a genuine lifter, a kick that raised him clear off the ground several inches. As the man landed, he darted away, and the detective once more proceeded toward the exit from the cemetery.

As our hero walked along he indulged his old-time habit, and soliloquized aloud:

"I reckon," he muttered, "that this is one of the darkest mysteries I ever set out to solve—a regular horror! I am not dealing with white men, but thugs from India!"

Our hero returned to his hotel. He had put in a good night's work, and had made an astounding discovery; but as yet he had come upon no proofs of an actual murder, nor had he established the fact that the girl lived.

Upon the following morning he read in the papers an account of the inquest held over the body of the park suicide.

The inquest had established nothing, and the original theory was seemingly still maintained.

One of the officers made a statement that a man of dark complexion and glittering black eyes had visited the Morgue, and had critically examined the body, but when asked if he recognized it, he had answered, "No."

Sleuth, however, identified the man as the doctor; and he also perceived that the parties who knew the woman had resolved not to come forward and declare her identity.

That same day about noon a queer-looking old woman, with a face as dark as a mulatto's, appeared at the counter in a little drug store down in the lower part of the city; she demanded to see the doctor, the reputed proprietor of the place.

A dark-faced youth was in charge of the store, and in answer to the old woman's inquiry, said:

"The doctor is not at home."

"When will he be at home?"

"Not until to-morrow."

"I am sorry; I came to see him on very important business."

"I do not believe you can see him to-day."

"Will he be at home to-night?"

"He may be in this evening, and he may not; it's very doubtful."

The old woman left the dingy little store, and a few seconds later a man with a dark face and glittering black eyes protruded his head from a rear room, and asked:

"What did that woman want?"

The answer came from the woman herself, who had dodged back into the store.

"I wanted to see you!" she exclaimed, as she walked straight toward the door where the doctor stood.

"It's the doctor you wish to see. He is not at home."

"I thought you were the doctor."

"I am his assistant."

"Very well, you can answer for the doctor. I wish to see you at once about a private matter."

"You will have to come some other time, madame; I am very busy."

"I can't help it; I must see you now; and I will see you! I have come a long distance, and my business is important!"

The man stepped out to the store, and said:

"Very well; what is your business?"

"I prefer to see you in private; and I know when you learn my business it will suit you better."

"Come this way, madame."

The doctor led the strange-looking woman into a rear office; and a curious place it was. Bottles containing preserved snakes, stuffed birds and animals, and bundles of herbs were arranged about the room on dozens of shelves.

The man seated himself at a little table, and said:

"Now, what is your business?"

"Can any one overhear what may pass between us?"

"No."

"Well, I have some private business. I have a strange story to tell you."

"Proceed."

The old woman looked around in a careful and furtive manner. "I have heard a great deal about you, Doctor Wadji, a great deal concerning your skill."

"I am not the doctor, I am his assistant."

The old woman laughed under her veil, and said:

"Doctor Wadji, I know you. I have seen you before; it is useless for you to attempt to deny your identity to me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE old woman's manners were perfect, and the tones of her voice exact; and not for one moment did the doctor question her appearance.

"Doctor, as I said before, I've heard all about you, of your skill in poisons and all manner of potions."

The doctor's face darkened, and a brighter glitter shone in his eyes.

"I know nothing about poisons. I deal in simple remedies. Are you sick? If so, I will do the best I can for you."

"I am not sick. I have a strange story to tell you."

"Madame, I must tell you once more that I have but little time; please tell me the strange story."

"I live back in the country. I am a nurse in a rich family, and there is a young lady in the family who is an heiress; and now something wonderful has happened to that young lady."

"What has happened to her?"

"She died."

"Do you call that something wonderful? Deaths, madame, are occurring every day."

The old woman leaned over toward the doctor, and in a strange tone whispered:

"But she ain't dead!"

The doctor looked at his visitor as though she were some old lunatic.

"What do you mean, madame? Are you making fun of me? You told me the young lady died, and now you tell me she is not dead! Will you explain?"

"Of course I will explain; and that's the reason I came to you; I want you to help me."

"Madame, you must excuse me, but I am compelled to tell you that you are either crazy or making fun of me."

"You will find out that I am not crazy, and that I am not making fun of you. There was a reason for making it appear that the young lady was dead."

A strange look came over the doctor's face.

"Why should any one desire to make it appear that the young lady was dead?"

"Oh, you understand all about that, doctor!"

"I do not understand you at all, madame."

"Then let me finish my story."

"Proceed, and finish your story."

"They had a funeral, and buried the poor girl, but—"

"Hold on, madame!" exclaimed the doctor; "I can not listen to any more of this nonsense! My time is too valuable."

There was a tremor in the doctor's voice.

"Yes, you will listen to me."

"I will send for the police. I will hand you over as a crazy woman."

"Oh, no; I am not crazy, and you shall listen to my story."

The doctor was greatly agitated; it was evident that he was trying to remain calm.

"Well, go on, madame, and finish your nonsensical tale."

"I will satisfy you before I get through that I am telling you the truth."

"Proceed."

"The lovely girl was buried alive!"

"How do you know she was buried alive?"

Again the old woman leaned over toward the doctor, and whispered:

"Because she was stolen from the grave!"

The doctor leaped to his feet involuntarily, a terrible look came into his eyes, and he reached forward as though to clutch hold of his visitor.

The old woman did not move, and the doctor restrained himself but he was most strangely agitated.

"Why do you come here with such a ridiculous story?"

"I want to get an antidote."

"For what?"

"To overcome the effect of the potion."

"Why did you come to me for an antidote?"

"Because I have been informed that you are acquainted with the power of all manner of drugs."

"You say the young lady has been taken from the tomb?"

"Yes."

"Who took her from the tomb?"

"I did."

"Why did you do so?"

"Because I suspected she was not dead."

"Madame, are you sure she is not dead?"

"I am sure."

"Where is the body?"

"I need not tell you, all I desire is an antidote."

"Take me to the place where the girl lies, and I will administer an antidote."

"I can not take you to the place."

"Why not?"

"Never mind. Can you give me an antidote?"

"You may wait a moment, and I will see what I can do."

The doctor opened an ebony cabinet. He took out several small vials.

The keen eyes beneath the veil watched every movement.

At length the doctor selected a certain vial, removed the tiny glass stopper, and stepped toward the old woman. He said:

"There is a certain poison which emits a peculiar odor. You

have seen the body; smell this, and tell me whether or not you recognize the odor. Raise your veil."

The old woman raised her veil, and the doctor put the vial to her nostrils, and the next instant the disguised Sleuth sunk back insensible.

"I thought so," muttered the doctor; and for a moment he stood over the insensible old woman with a demoniac expression of triumph upon his dark face.

The cunning doctor had prepared for the old woman a drug so powerful that one sniff produced instantaneous insensibility.

The man was a deep and cunning fellow, and the very moment the disguised Sleuth spoke of the girl, a suspicion flashed through the poisoner's mind that a detective was on his track.

There lay the great Sleuth, helpless and insensible. That brain which had so often defeated cunning and treachery had been put to sleep by one sniff of a tiny vial in the hands of the Indian doctor.

Only a moment did the doctor stand and contemplate his work. He had but silenced the detective temporarily; it was necessary to silence him forever.

Doctor Wadji again opened his cabinet and selected another vial, and with the glass in his hand, he approached the sleeping detective.

The doctor made a movement to pour some liquid in the insensible man's ear, when the detective opened his eyes.

There was a stern look upon his face.

The doctor recoiled.

Sleuth said, still imitating the tone and manners of an old woman:

"Doctor, I reckon it's all right, only that must have been the stuff that was given to the young lady. Why, it would almost appear that you gave it to her."

"Who are you?" demanded the doctor, "and why have you come here?"

"I told you my business. Can you give me the antidote?"

The doctor cast his glittering eyes around. A new project had entered his head. He was now assured that his visitor was a deadly foe, a detective, and he concluded to change his tactics.

"Old woman, I must request you to leave this office."

"I won't go."

"Then I shall call the police."

"No, you will not call the police."

"You are very impertinent."

"I am."

The detective had partially thrown off his mask. He had been speaking like a woman. He uttered the words "I am" in the deep bass voice of a man.

The doctor was cool as a cucumber. He had fully recovered his nerve. He fully realized that he was in peril.

"You are not a woman!" he said.

The detective laughed.

"You are a man in disguise! Who are you?"

"A gentleman who has called to see you on a little matter that has not been made public."

"What does all this mean?"

"It means, you scoundrel! that your little game has been nipped in the bud!"

"What game?"

"It won't do, doctor! Now just open up the whole game. I've got the facts right down on you."

The doctor stared aghast, while the detective threw off the wig and stepped from the female garments.

"You say you have all the facts?"

"Yes."

"Will you state them to me?"

"Where is the body of Alice?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"Did you not attend a young lady for small-pox lately—a young lady who died and was buried two days ago?"

"I did."

"The step-cousin of a man named George Bindal?"

"Yes."

"You gave a certificate of death for the disease I have named?"

"Yes."

"Why did you do so?"

"What business is it of yours what I do in my profession?"

"You are such a desperate liar I do not feel bound to tell you."

"Sir, I warn you!"

"Warn away. You are an infamous falsifier and perjurer, all the same."

The doctor drew a pistol; but he did not use it. Old Sleuth showed him a cooler.

"Don't attempt that little game, doctor," said our hero; and he showed a barker, leveled and ready.

"You have insulted me."

"Oh, no, I have not insulted you. I could not insult *you*; so put up your shooter, or, rather, pass it over to me."

"I'll not surrender my weapon."

"Then I'll shoot you where you stand!"

"Murder me?"

"No; drop you in the way of duty."

"Why have you come here?"

"To investigate a piece of villainy. Hand me over that pistol!"

"No, I will not; you may shoot me down, but you shall not come here with your infamous insinuations and track me down to an acknowledgment, through my cowardice, of culpability."

"You must come down from your high tone, doctor."

"With what am I charged?"

"Murder!"

"Then why do you not arrest me?"

"You are my prisoner! Hand over that pistol!"

"I will not hand over the pistol, and I am not your prisoner until you produce a warrant for my arrest."

"We do not require warrants on a charge of murder."

"I am no murderer! I am prepared to answer for my conduct. My record is perfectly clear."

"This won't do, doctor."

"Then do your worst."

"I shall! I am doing it now. You admit attending the young lady in question?"

"I admit attending a young lady at the mansion of Mr. Bindal."

"And you gave a certificate that her death was produced by small-pox. The certificate was a false one. Your oath was perjury."

"I deny it."

"I have a fact to disclose. I saw the body."

"When did you see it?"

"When it lay in the coffin in the mansion of George Bindal."

A moment the doctor was silent.

Strange thoughts were passing through the man's mind. He was talking against time. He had determined that Sleuth should never leave that office alive.

"Come, come, doctor," said our hero, "you might as well open this matter all up! I tell you, I've the facts all down on you. Why did you deny being the doctor when I first entered this office?"

"I wished to save myself annoyance."

"And you told a falsehood to save yourself annoyance?"

"I did; and now arrest me!"

"I will arrest you in good time. I've a warrant."

"Where is it?"

"Here!"

The detective pointed to his cocked revolver.

"I am not the man you can scare. You say the girl did not die of small-pox?"

"I do."

"Very well, make your statement public; do not come here and bother me; order an exhumation; let the coroner decide the question."

"The body has been removed."

"By whom?"

"By you."

"It's false!"

"Hand over that weapon!"

"I will not."

Sleuth had remained sitting all the time, but he suddenly arose from his chair.

He advanced toward the doctor. The latter stood motionless. Sleuth suddenly leaped forward and grasped the arm that held the pistol and wrested it from the man's grasp.

"You are acting in a high-handed manner!"

"Yes; it's a way I've got. And now, doctor, where is the body of the girl?"

"I do not know. But listen. If there is anything wrong, I offer to assist you in discovering who has perpetrated the wrong."

"Thank you; but I do not need the sort of assistance you proffer. You are the man who has done the wrong."

"Then arrest me."

"I am not a fool! You have played a deep game. You do not fear arrest because you think you have covered your tracks, but I will uncover them before I get through with you!"

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Doctor, you are from the Indies?"

"Well?"

"You sent two thugs to murder a man whom you suspected would visit that tomb?"

"It's false!"

"The two men were countrymen of yours."

"I know nothing of them."

The detective seized hold of the doctor. The latter was like a child in the grip of the muscular detective. Sleuth had terrible eyes when he chose to throw a warning light into them. He leaned forward, placed his lips close to the man's ear, and whispered:

"Surrender the body of the girl, or I will strangle you!"

As the detective spoke, his powerful fingers closed round the throat of the doctor.

Our hero had oftentimes forced men, under similar circumstances, to yield; but, for once, he encountered a man whose lips would not uncloset, even to escape strangulation.

The detective relaxed his grasp.

The doctor showed no sign of fear, and said:

"I am not afraid of death."

Sleuth stood for a moment considering what he should do. He had hoped to force the doctor to a confession. He was satisfied he might as well seek to make a stone talk.

CHAPTER V.

Our hero could not have arrested the man. He could have made the whole thing public, and have invited an investigation, but he could prove nothing.

Sleuth at length decided upon a plan. He drew from his pocket a pair of handcuffs, and quick as a wink he adjusted them upon the doctor's wrists.

Having handcuffed the fellow, our hero crossed the room, and locked and bolted the door of the office on the inside.

Having locked and bolted the door, the detective said:

"Now, doctor, before I go further, I've a few words to say."

"Proceed."

"You are a smart man, you have conceived a brilliant scheme, but I am well in on your track. I've uncovered every move; you can not win. You now have a chance to save yourself."

"I am not seeking to save myself."

"We may as well understand each other; we will talk plain. As matters stand, you have a part of your game yet well covered, but before I get through I will have everything laid open."

"You are the doctor; proceed."

There was something wonderful in the villain's nerve and utter coolness. Sleuth had never encountered such a man before.

The detective remained silent for a few moments, and steadily studied the doctor's face.

"There is a chance for you to save yourself, doctor; but it is your last chance."

"I am asking nothing at your hands."

"I will find that body—both bodies—and bring them in the end as ghastly testimony against you."

"I defy you, because I am an innocent man! I am willing that all my acts should be investigated. I will go with you to jail without resistance. I have nothing more to say."

"Very well. It's you or I—you will come to the gallows, or I to my grave at your hands or instigation! But, mark me, I shall press this matter clear through to the bitter end."

"Go on!"

"I shall array George Bindal against you."

The doctor changed color. Sleuth noted that he had struck home at last.

"You heard what I said?"

"Yes."

"You have played false to George Bindal."

"He is the man to complain, not you."

"And you will not treat with me?"

"I will not."

"You propose to take all the chances?"

"I do; an innocent man's chances. I am now convinced that you're employed by Bindal to come here and intimidate me into becoming an accessory to any scheme he may have, but you will not succeed. I am an honest man, and can not be bought to do a wrong by all the wealth of George Bindal! Please remember my words, and listen, and should new facts be developed, you will know how to use them."

The detective gazed at the man in amazement. He was the most level-headed villain the veteran had ever encountered.

"You scoundrel!" said the detective, "you invite me to proceed? I will, and when I am through I will bring forth a *dénouement* that will shake even your guilty soul!"

Our hero placed a gag in the man's mouth; the doctor submitted without resistance to the indignity, and when Sleuth bound his feet the fellow's eyes gave no sign.

Having secured his man, the detective opened a door opposite to the one opening into the store, and found himself in a narrow passage-way.

He ascended a stair-way and found himself later on passing through a suite of neatly furnished rooms.

"The body has not been brought here," he muttered, and he descended the stairs.

The detective was about to re-enter the office, and was feeling along the wall for the door, when suddenly he came to a dead halt, and the old-time expression, "I'll be hanged!" fell from his lips.

The hallway was dark, and that fact necessitated feeling for the door, which he had closed on leaving the office, and it was the latter fact, which will be seen as we proceed, that led to a remarkable discovery.

The East Indian doctor's house was a man-trap, full of all manner of ingenious contrivances, and as our narrative proceeds our readers will learn why the wretch, the deliberate, cold-blooded monster, had made his residence a net-work of death-dealing devices.

The detective drew his masked-lantern, and slipping the mask, let the sharp ray of light run along the side wall of the hall.

It was seemingly an ordinary partition; but the detective was looking for something. He had seen ordinary partitions before, and many times had gone behind them and made the most wonderful discoveries.

The detective took from his pocket a curious little instrument. He was quite a mechanic and a skillful inventor, and he had utilized almost every branch of mechanical science to aid him in his profession.

The curious little instrument was placed upon the wall, and the detective moved it along slowly, and soon there came a little indication that caused him to remark:

"I thought so."

The instrument was moved backward along the wall, and, after a moment, there came a second indication.

"So far so good," muttered Sleuth; and he went down in his pocket and brought forth a second instrument, and the latter was moved across the partition.

It was a tedious job. He was compelled to move his tell-tale very slowly; but he was a man of rare patience and untiring energy, and at length he won, as announced by his exclamation:

"Eureka!"

The detective pressed his hand upon a part of the partition and the wall broke. Skill, patience, and ingenuity were rewarded.

The detective had found a secret spring, and upon touching the spring, which had been cunningly placed way down in the subbase of the partition, a door opened, and a secret stair-way was revealed.

The detective descended the stair-way, and soon found himself in a stone-ceiled cellar with several intersecting passages.

The detective had kept his dark-lantern in his hand, and was moving slowly along, when suddenly he tripped over an object.

He lowered his lantern, and his glance fell upon a portion of a human form, and a closer examination revealed the fact that it was part of the body of a female.

For once in his life the detective was set clean back; his blood ran cold.

"What does this mean?" he muttered. "Oh, can it be possible that I have discovered a *part* of what was in that coffin?"

The detective moved on and soon saw a door. He pushed the door open, crossed the threshold, and stepped into the room.

He had run into a trap, and he realized his peril in an instant, but it was too late to avoid the immediate consequences.

The door had banged to after his entrance, and when he sought to open it he discovered that it was a spring-lock. He was a prisoner; the door could only be opened from the outside.

"I'm here," he muttered, "and I'll just look around a bit before I take measures to get out of this nice little man-trap."

Suddenly a new danger threatened the detective, and he was called upon to face the most subtle peril mortal man ever encountered. There came to his senses a peculiar odor.

The detective sniffed the air, and his brave heart for once stood still.

He had evidence of the cunning of the doctor, and when he caught the odor he had everything to fear.

Death stared him in the face—an easy death forsooth; but the agony did not come of the certainty of death, but chagrin to think how easily he had been caught in a trap by the monster Doctor Wadji.

The detective tried to force the door; but it would not yield, and he knew it would take time to force it, and time he did not have at that fearful moment.

Sleuth suddenly uttered a glad cry. Hope once more glowed in his heart. He recognized the odor, and his wonderful mind suggested a chance for escape, even from the strange and terrible peril that had come upon him so suddenly.

The detective drew a match from his pocket, ignited it, and ran the tiny blaze around the room. Suddenly there came a report, and a bright flame shot forth from one corner of the floor.

Sleuth laughed—laughed almost hysterically. His wonderful presence of mind had aided him in protecting himself against one of the most cunning schemes ever conceived for the committal of a murder.

He subsequently learned how his peril had come about.

The door was arranged on an automatic principle. When it banged to it turned the stop-cock of a gas-pipe, and as there was no vent, death from suffocation was but a question of time, and a very brief period of time at best.

The detective, having overcome the immediate peril, set to work to open the door. When the door was forced open, the veteran remarked:

"Well, doctor, you didn't catch me this time; but you came very close—much closer than I ever want another villain like yourself to come!"

Having made sure of his safety, the detective glanced around the room, and soon made the positive discovery that the herb-store was only a blind. The doctor was engaged in a criminal business, and the secret of the death arrangements and man-traps were explained.

A few moments later and he returned to the office where he had left the monster bound and tied. He removed the gag from the man's mouth and unbound him.

The doctor, upon being released, seated himself in a chair, but said nothing.

At length our hero remarked:

"Well, you are the most consummate rascal I ever met! You claim to be an honest man, eh?"

"I am an honest man."

"I have been down in your cemetery."

"I carry on a legitimate business there. You may think you have made a great discovery, but I can refer to the professors in the college, who will all tell you I am an honest man. It is for them to account for the subjects."

"Have you made a subject of Alice Fairfax?"

"I know nothing about Alice Fairfax."

"You know nothing about the attempt to murder me?"

"How could I attempt to murder you? Did you not leave me here bound hand and feet?"

The detective concluded that he had nothing more to make on that lay for the time being, and he said:

"You will hear from me again."

"Why do you not arrest me?"

There was a glitter of triumph in the doctor's eyes as he threw out his words of defiance.

He thought he had won—believed he had baffled Sleuth.

Sleuth left the place. He had placed all the female apparel in a bag which he had carried with him upon his entrance into the place.

The detective was a busy man. It was night when he reached his hotel, and as he sat over the meal he had ordered, he revolved in his mind all the exciting incidents he had encountered.

Sleuth was forced to the conclusion that the girl was dead—that her body had been stolen merely to avoid any possible suspicion as to the real cause of her death.

He ate his meal, and then made preparations for a little surprise business in another direction.

He had failed with the doctor. He hoped to succeed in another direction.

It was midnight when two people sat in the rear parlor of the Brutone mansion.

There were no servants in the house save two, and those two were in league with the man who, since the death of Alice Fairfax, claimed to be the owner.

One of the two was a man—a tall, powerful-looking fellow—who had evidently just returned from a journey.

The man and woman had been talking in an eager manner, and we come in upon them just as the man remarked:

"And you say you found a man in the parlor standing over the body of Alice. Who was he?"

"How should I know?"

"What excuse did he give for entering the house?"

"He gave no excuse."

"And where was Victor all the time?"

"I summoned him."

"Why did not Victor strangle him?"

"He would have done so, but the man laid Victor out so quickly, the giant did not know who struck him."

"This is strange news, Sara."

"It is strange."

"And Parthenia is dead?"

"Yes; she is dead, and to her we owe the presence of that man."

"This is bad business, Sara. The girl must have betrayed us."

"The girl became conscience-stricken. The moment she had administered the dose to Alice she became like a crazy woman."

"You should have set a watch over her."

"We did more. Doctor Wadji gave her a dose—a potion."

"And it did not quiet her?"

"In some way she must have fooled us by not taking the potion. She escaped from the house, and within an hour she was found dead in the park."

The man appeared greatly troubled by all that he heard, and he remarked:

"It would have been better had I remained here."

CHAPTER VI.

"Yes," said the woman, "it would have been better had you remained at home."

"What has become of the body of Parthenia?"

"Therein comes the mystery. If the girl did betray us, the one to whom she betrayed us has remained silent. He did not appear at the inquest, and no disclosures were made; the suicide was declared a party unknown. She was buried in Potter's Field, and the matter has quieted down."

"There is something strangely mysterious about all this. What does the doctor say?"

"Nothing. He was present at the inquest, but you know he is a man who never speaks."

The man was silent for a moment, but at length he said:

"I wonder if we could manage to get him out of the way with one of his own doses?"

"But what shall we do with the mysterious man who was standing over the coffin?"

"Sara, I do not believe Parthenia betrayed us."

"What do you suspect?"

"I suspect the doctor had some design, and that he sent the man here."

"What would he send him here for, George?"

"That man has made a preposterous demand."

"What was his demand?"

"Half the estate."

"We can not spare him a penny!" exclaimed the woman, as a strange glitter shone in her eyes.

"We must pay him—pay him well—but I do not propose to share my estate with him."

"Suppose he should betray us?"

"He would only place the noose round his own neck. He is the assassin."

The woman was silent. She had a marked face—a countenance that expressed more resolution and courage than is generally seen upon the face of a woman.

After a moment she said:

"George, I think we have reason to fear that man."

"I know we have reason to fear him, and I mean to have him out of the way."

"A strange suspicion has come over my mind."

"If you suspect him of being capable of treachery, you are not wrong."

"I suspect more."

"Well, let me hear it."

"That man loved Alice!"

"Suppose he did love her?"

"A man would not kill a woman he loved unless in a fit of jealousy."

"But we know this man did kill the woman he loved, in case your suspicion as to his love is correct."

"That is not my suspicion."

"What is your suspicion?"

"That he did not kill her!"

"Why, woman, you are going mad! Did you not see her lying dead in her coffin?"

"She seemed to be dead."

"Then why did you permit her to be carried from the house if she was not dead? Sara, this is all nonsense!"

"It is not nonsense!"

"You say some one else indulged the suspicion?"

"Yes—the man who stood over the coffin."

"How do you know?"

"I heard him mutter as he stood over the coffin, 'She appears to be dead, but, as I live, she lives!'"

"What could he have meant?"

"Just what he said."

"Bah! it was a game of the doctor."

"Yes, it was a game of the doctor."

The woman spoke in a meaning tone:

"What is his game? When he was engaged to do this job how much were you to pay him?"

"Some thousands of dollars."

"And now he demands a million?"

"Yes."

"You know the doctor well?"

"I do; but he will never force that sum from me."

"Suppose the girl is living, and in the custody of the doctor?"

"The girl is dead."

"She has been removed from the coffin; the body is gone!"

"Mercy, woman! What is this you are telling me?"

"I am telling you the truth."

"How do you know the body is not in the tomb?"

"I sent to see. Two people were disappointed, for another party went to the tomb."

"Who?"

"I do not know; but the coffin had been opened before he reached there."

"Who could it have been?"

"I suspect it was the same party who entered this house."

"Sara, you are telling me dreadful news."

"I know I am; but I tell you something strange is going on. We have a bitter enemy somewhere, some person who knows too much."

The man was thoughtful for a few moments, but at length he said:

"I begin to see through the game, Sara."

"What do you see?"

"The girl is really dead."

"Well?"

"But he intends to make us believe that she still lives."

"That is my idea, George. But now tell me, brother, who is the man who stood over the coffin?"

George Bindal could not answer the question that had been put to him by his sister.

The latter was a remarkable woman—an ambitious woman—and our readers will excuse us if, right here, we open up a little of the previous history of the parties to whom they have been introduced in the pages of our narrative.

A noted Spanish actress had met and charmed an American, who had been a temporary sojourner in Madrid.

The woman at the time was a widow, and the mother of two children.

The American was Mr. Brutone, and the beautiful actress—beautiful at the age of fifty—was the mother of George and Sara Bindal.

After her marriage, Mrs. Brutone, *née* Mrs. Bindal, left the stage, and after several years spent in Europe, accompanied her husband to America, where she died, several years before the death of her husband.

George Bindal and his sister had resided with their step-father, and always expected to inherit his property, until after his death, when a lawyer produced a will which was duly witnessed, and, in time, properly probated.

This sister had been in Europe when her step-father died. She was living in Paris, and was reputed to be a great American heiress. A stranded duke had fallen in love with her, and would have married her had it not been that the will was produced.

The woman was mad with rage, and at once set to work to influence her brother to make himself the residuary legatee.

As intimated in our preceding chapters, according to the terms of the will the step-son was to inherit in case the nephew and niece should die without issue. The step-daughter had no interest in the will.

Sara Bindal had always exercised a great influence over her brother, who was still a bachelor. The sister was also a very ambitious creature, and when she managed to become engaged to a duke, the grand end of her life was accomplished.

George Bindal was easily influenced, as he was an avaricious and grasping man, and, strangely enough, he also had become affianced to rank, having won the affections of the daughter of a Russian prince.

George had been to India, and while there he had made the acquaintance of a famous snake-charmer, magician, and physician, and years later in the United States he had met his former acquaintance, the Indian doctor, in the person of Doctor Wadji, the pretended herbalist.

George Bindal did not renew the acquaintance until such time as he needed the doctor's services, and then he proceeded in a very cunning manner to do so.

He was a cunning man in his way, and he soon learned that the doctor was engaged in criminal practices, and he took advantage of his knowledge to engage the Indian as a confederate in his scheme of murder.

A contract was made with Doctor Wadji, and it was the active brain of the woman who arranged the horrible scheme.

George Bindal, at his sister's request, had absented himself while the terrible crime was being perpetrated.

The woman was wonderfully deep and far-seeing. She considered that George, being the heir, it was necessary for his skirts to be clean before the law, in case of accident or discovery.

Charles Alexander Brutone, the nephew, was at first disposed of in a manner which will be disclosed as our story progresses; but before his taking off a greater wrong had been done him.

Charles and Alice loved each other. Their love was pure and intense. They had been strangers until the death of their uncle, owing to a family feud, so common between families since the world commenced.

Alice was a remarkable girl. She had been educated with the idea that she was to earn her own living, and the result was she became a wonderfully accomplished young lady, being an expert in music and all modern accomplishments, including a thorough knowledge of all the modern languages.

She was as beautiful as she was accomplished, and as lovely in

her temperament as she was beautiful. She was a girl of decided talents, strong impulses, and impetuous disposition.

Charles Brutone was also a handsome man, and fairly accomplished. He was brave, honorable, and lovable, and it was not strange that after a time the two young people should learn to delight in the provisions of the will, which practically made it obligatory for them to marry in order to inherit.

The war against the happy young lovers commenced at once, and it was a deep, cunning, and heartless woman who carried on the scheme.

Sara Bindal was a handsome woman, and a perfect lady in her deportment, and also had enjoyed a large experience in what is called the very best society.

She was a charming woman when she desired to be so, and she at once set herself to charm Alice Fairfax.

Having won the lovely girl's confidence, the designing woman began to carry out her fell purpose.

Carefully she commenced creating in the mind of Alice a doubt and distrust of the love and faithfulness of Charles.

Alice was of a jealous disposition, and the wicked woman first played upon the latter element in her character.

She first offered little suggestions as to its being unfortunate that their uncle had not left the choice to their inclinations.

One day Alice and Sara were together, when the latter dropped a casual word which caused Alice to ask:

"Why do you say that, Sara, dear?"

The woman at once sought to play the artful dodge of not desiring to answer, making it appear that her declaration had been involuntary.

"Sara, I wish you would tell me just what you mean."

"Alice, I love you as mother never loved child."

"I believe you, Sara, and I wish you would explain the many dark suggestions you have dropped lately. The time has come when I must insist upon an explanation. I love Charles, but I would rather sacrifice my interest in the estate than marry an unworthy man."

"Oh, Alice, do not urge me to speak!"

"I do urge you—I command you to speak!"

"Not now, child, not now; some other time. I may be mistaken. Let me wait a day or two, Alice. I would not wrong Charles for all the world. But, Alice, I love you. I would not see you sacrificed to a selfish man. Indeed, girl, I will speak plainly just once—I would not see you betrayed!"

"Oh, Sara, what terrible suspicion are you suggesting?"

Alice had become greatly agitated; her eyes shone with unusual brilliancy, her face was pale, and her lovely features were convulsed with apprehension.

In a seemingly reluctant tone, Sara Bindal said:

"Alice, did you ever consider the cruel terms of your uncle's will?"

"Never until now."

"In case you die the whole estate goes to your cousin, Charles Alexander Brutone; should he die, the whole estate goes to you."

"There is nothing cruel in that provision," said the girl. "Charles and I are the only surviving heirs and relatives."

"No; there is nothing cruel in that provision; but if either refuses to marry the other, the one who refuses loses all interest in the estate, becomes as though he or she were dead as far as the will is concerned; to inherit jointly you must marry!"

The wily woman put peculiar stress upon the words, "you must marry."

"Charles and I love each other. He loves me devotedly, and I—oh, Sara, words can not express my love for Charles!"

The woman who was insidiously distilling her poisonous venom did not reply immediately, but permitted a peculiar expression to shadow her handsome face. She made it appear that she could say something, but did not care to speak.

"It is cruel of me to speak; but, Alice, I must say that I have discovered that Charles is avaricious."

"It's false!"

"Enough, dear girl; I will say no more."

"But you shall say more. You must have some grounds for all you have said. Yes, Sara, you must tell me all that you suspect."

"You think Charles loves you?"

"I know he loves me."

"How do you know it, child?"

"He has told me so over and over again."

"Let me suppose a case, Alice: remember the terms of the will, and then suppose it were possible that Charles had loved before he met you—before he knew the cruel terms of your uncle's will. Suppose Charles were an avaricious man; under the terms of the will could he do aught else but tell you that he loved you? To refuse to marry you would cost him a fortune."

"Oh, Sara, Sara, you are killing me! I never looked upon it in that light. I believed Charles. I love him. He told me he loved me, and I believed him."

"Alice, he may love you, but alas! even loving you, there are reasons why he might seek to deceive you."

"Do not torture me; tell me all."

"No, no; you would go to Charles and upbraid him."

"Never!"

"Enough, Alice. I know well that, when once you possess the proofs of his treachery, your pride will prevent you from repeating aught to him. Your life is in danger!"

"I do not understand you."

"If you were dead, Charles would become the heir, the sole heir?"

"Yes."

Sara Bindal's face was pale, and she spoke in a husky whisper, as she said:

"You must watch Charles."

"Why?"

"Alice, we have reason to fear that Charles has already attempted to murder you!"

"Oh, no! oh, no! This is some terrible dream, or you are mad! You do not know what you say!"

"Can you dissimulate, Alice?"

"Do you mean deceive Charles?"

"I only mean can you control yourself for a few days and not betray your suspicions?"

"I can."

"Enough! I will speak out. Charles has held frequent conversations with a man whom the police suspect is a dealer in secret potions and poisons. Come with me, and I will show you something. But, child, you must be firm; I am saving your life."

Sara led the agitated girl to her cousin's room. She opened a bureau drawer and coolly drew forth a little book which contained the most damning evidence of Charles Brutone's perfidy.

CHAPTER VII.

"SEE this," said Sara Bindal; and she showed Alice a little book with the leaf turned down at a particular page; and the page was well thumbed, as though the book had been carefully studied.

The volume was a little book by an Italian chemist, and was a treatise on the uses and abuses of subtle poisons.

"Why should Charles study this book?" demanded Sara in a hoarse whisper.

Alice turned deathly pale.

"Is this all you have whereon to found your suspicion?"

"No."

"What other evidence have you?"

"Are not these sufficient?"

"They are not sufficient to break my faith in my cousin. He may be studying chemistry, and, indeed, there may be a dozen explanations for his study of this book."

"But his intimacy with a dealer in subtle poisons?"

"May all be explained away. I shall ask Charles about it."

"And invite your own death! No, no, you shall not speak to him; you have promised me that you will not until you have positive proofs."

A day or two passed, when one day Sara met Charles Brutone in the hall. She asked him to take a glass of lemonade up to Alice.

The young man took the glass and proceeded upstairs. He knocked at the door of his cousin's room, and was bid to enter.

Alice looked pale and sick.

"My dear," said the young man, "how ill you look. Come, here is a nice glass of lemonade I have prepared for you. Drink some of it and you will feel refreshed!"

"Leave it on the table, Charles; I will drink it by and by."

The remark, "I have prepared for you," was a careless slip of the tongue; the young man had intended to say, "I have brought you." He urged Alice to drink the acid-water, but she declined, and a few moments later, after many endearing expressions, he left the room.

Half an hour later the young man came down the stairs from his own room, and as he passed the door of Alice's room, he asked:

"How do you feel, my dear?"

"I am feeling better."

"Did you drink the lemonade?"

"Not yet."

"Drink it, darling; I know you will feel much better," called the young man; and he passed on down-stairs, and a moment later the street door closed after him.

As the young man went out, a pale-faced woman passed by the stairs and entered the presence of Alice.

"How do you feel, my dear?" asked Sara Bindal.

"Oh, Sara, I shall die!"

"Are you sick?"

"Yes, sick at heart. Despite my efforts to the contrary, I can not suppress a distrust in Charles."

"Have you noted anything tending to confirm our suspicions?"

"Nothing. Charles appears to me as frank and lovable as ever; but I have been thinking, thinking, thinking!"

"Of what have you been thinking, dear child?"

"The terms of that hateful will; and I have come to a certain determination."

"What determination have you reached?"

"I shall refuse to marry Charles."

"Then he will inherit all the money!"

"That is just what I desire. It will be best."

"Yes; and he will recognize it as a test, and will refuse to release you from your promise to marry him."

"Not if he loves some one else."

A pleased smile gleamed upon the face of the scheming woman. She began to recognize the effect of the subtle poison she had instilled into the beautiful girl's mind.

Sara Bindal, after a moment, pretended to suddenly behold a glass of lemonade.

"Oh, there is a nice glass of lemonade, Alice; will you drink it?"

"No; Charles made it for me, and brought it up, and urged me to drink it; but I do not like lemonade; but he was very anxious I should drink it."

"Do you intend to drink it?"

"No."

"Then I will—it looks as though it were very nice."

The woman went to the table. There was an expression upon her face that was simply demoniacal, as she raised the tempting-looking glass of lemonade to her lips. She took a sip, an exclamation fell from her lips, and her countenance assumed an expression of horror and terror.

Wonderfully well did the woman act her part.

"What is the matter?" demanded Alice, a look of amazement overspreading her beautiful face.

Sara Bindal managed to make her wicked face appear ghastly, as she said in a husky voice:

"Oh, Alice, did Charles really prepare this for you?"

"Yes."

"And urged you to drink it?"

"Yes, yes," came the response in a husky voice.

Alice began to fear the worst; and well she might, so well did Sara Bindal act her part.

Alice hid her face in her hands, and the scheming Sara improved the opportunity. There was an expression upon the woman's face that was perfectly fiendish, as she emptied a little vial of colorless liquid in the lemonade.

The wicked plot was being well carried out.

"Alice, once again I must ask you, did Charles urge you to drink the lemonade?" said Sara Bindal.

"He did."

"I fear, child, that we now have the most damning proofs."

"What do you mean?"

"There is something wrong with the drink."

"What can be wrong?"

"We shall see."

There was a cage of birds in the room. The woman said:

"Watch me, Alice; we shall learn the truth."

Sara Bindal poured some of the lemonade into the little drink-bottle attached to the cage.

One of the birds hopped down and drank of the water, and immediately it fell over dead.

Both women stood transfixed.

A moment's awful silence followed. The silence was broken by Sara Bindal, who asked in a voice of deep huskiness:

"Why should Charles urge you to drink that lemonade?"

The query fell upon ears that heard not. Alice had fainted.

Sara caught the girl in her arms, and at once commenced applying restoratives.

In time she succeeded; Alice revived.

"My dear child, do not fear," murmured Sara.

In tones of wonderful firmness, Alice said:

"I wish I had drunk the lemonade. I should rather have died than have learned of Charles' perfidy!"

"Alice, you must never see him again."

"Why should he seek to kill me? Oh, Charles, Charles! had it been any other drink I would have taken it, and I would never have discovered that you are a villain—a murderer—and it would have been better so! Yes, yes, I would that I had died!"

"Listen, Alice, now I can speak plainly: the mask has been thrown off. My brother has been upon the track of your cousin, and has made a most terrible discovery."

"Do not tell me more."

"Yes, child, you shall listen. What I have to tell you will, to a certain extent, excuse Charles, and explain why he was urged to attempt this terrible deed."

"No, no; do not tell me any more!"

"Listen, Alice: he was urged on to do the deed."

"By whom? Who urged Charles to murder me?"

"His wife."

"Charles has a wife?"

"Will you listen to the story? Your cousin is not so greatly to blame as may appear at first glance. He was charmed, poor boy! by a wicked, ambitious, and beautiful woman. She inveigled him into a marriage, and she has used her influence over him to lead him on to the committal of this terrible crime. The young man is mad. She has infatuated him. He is under a spell, like a bird fluttering under the glance of a serpent."

Alice stood aghast while listening to the false tale that was being poured into her ear by a female fiend.

"Your brother learned all this?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not tell me the horrid truth?"

"I could not do it, Alice; and I should still have remained silent if it had not been for the revelation of that glass of lemonade."

"Oh, Sara, what shall I do? I never wish to again gaze on the face of the man who has thus betrayed me!"

"You must leave this house, and then my brother will tax your cousin to his face—tell him of the discovery."

While Sara Bindal was working her scheme against Alice, another confederate was playing an equally wicked game against Charles Brutone.

Upon the very day that the incidents we have detailed above took place, a fearful tragedy occurred.

A young man, whose identity for the present our readers must guess, received a missive calling him to an appointment on the banks of the Schuylkill River.

Late in the afternoon of the same day a young man was walking along the banks of the river, when suddenly a rope went hurtling through the air. It fell across the shoulders of the young man; it tightened about his throat. He had not time to make an outcry; the work of the strangler was too quick. The young man fell to the ground and expired, the unsuspecting victim of a thug.

Two glittering-eyed, tawny-faced men stole from a thicket and advanced toward the body.

The assassins exchanged a few words, when they lifted the body in their arms, and a moment later it was cast into the river.

A few weeks later there was a funeral in the Brutone mansion; the funeral which has been alluded to in a previous chapter.

It was given out that the young man, Charles Alexander Brutone, had died of small-pox.

A horror of the terrible disease had kept friends from making inquiries, and the same cause permitted a private funeral.

Our readers will recollect that when Old Sleuth visited the vault in the cemetery he opened the coffin and found it empty, as he did the casket which should have contained the body of Alice Fairfax.

A time came when the discovery started Sleuth upon an extraordinary trail, and it was but a few weeks later on that the trail was begun.

Meantime, poor Alice was ignorant of all that had occurred.

She was stopping at a country house which was part of the Brutone property.

Sara Bindal came often to see Alice, who was under the temporary charge of Victor and Parthenia, and during her visit there came a *dénouement*.

Parthenia was a French girl who had long been in the service of Sara Bindal. She had been an unfortunate woman, and had been befriended by Miss Bindal, who later on took her into her employ, and in time made her a confederate and confidante.

Parthenia had acted as a decoy in the tragedy which resulted in the murder on the banks of the Schuylkill; and when the second murder took place, the girl, filled with remorse, killed herself, as described in a preceding chapter, and left the letter which started the veteran Sleuth upon the trail of mystery.

As narrated, Sara visited Alice at stated intervals, and always brought some confirming tale to her of Charles Brutone's perfidy.

One day Victor and Parthenia dropped a few words which caused Alice to ask some pertinent questions.

"Sara," she said, "is Charles Brutone ill?"

Sara Bindal pretended to be surprised, and asked:

"Why do you make such an inquiry?"

"I overheard a few words that passed between Victor and Parthenia."

The deceived girl did not dream that the words had purposely been spoken in her hearing at the instigation of the scheming Sara.

"Did Victor and Parthenia tell you anything?"

"I did not ask them; I waited to speak with you."

"My poor child, already retribution has fallen upon the head of Charles."

"Is he dead?" demanded Alice in an agitated tone.

"No; he is not dead. But he is very ill."

"I must go to him."

"Why, child, you are crazy! Would you go to the man who sought to murder you?"

"Still I must go to him."

"No, no; it is impossible. Listen, Alice: his wife is with him." Alice recoiled. "It would not be proper for you to go, child."

"It is enough. I will not go."

A few days passed, and Sara called again to see Alice.

The scheming woman looked shocked and sad.

"How is Charles?" asked Alice.

"Charles is dead. He was buried a few hours after his death, according to law."

A few days passed and Alice was brought back to her home, and at once a scheme was set on foot to murder the poor girl as her innocent cousin had been murdered.

Our readers are acquainted with all that occurred up to the time that Sleuth held his remarkable interview with Doctor Wadji.

Our readers will also remember an interview occurred between Sara Bindal and her brother George on the night succeeding the interview above alluded to between Sleuth and the doctor.

The sister had put the startling inquiry to her brother, "Who was the man who stood over the coffin?" and, as stated at the beginning of the succeeding chapter, George Bindal was silent.

The woman repeated her question.

"Answer me, George: who was the man who stood over the coffin?"

"We must find out, Sara," at length the man replied.

"One thing is certain, George, we are moving in the dark now; there is a traitor somewhere."

"Parthenia may have betrayed us. There is some one working against us now."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"Wadji."

As the woman pronounced the name, the old adage about the devil always appearing when mentioned was most singularly verified, for the door opened and the glittering-eyed doctor, with a noiseless step, entered the room and confronted brother and sister. The man looked his surprise; the woman uttered a little scream of terror.

"You did not expect me?" he asked.

"No."

"You were talking about me?"

The man spoke in an authoritative tone. There was one person whom Sara Bindal feared, and that person was Doctor Wadji.

The woman had uttered a little cry of surprise, but she speedily recovered her composure.

George Bindal was uneasy; but Sara, as stated, had recovered from her surprise.

"Yes, we were speaking about you."

"What were you saying?"

"Possibly you were listening, and know just what was said."

The woman met the doctor with a glare as bold as his own.

"I did not hear what you said."

"I should have been perfectly willing for you to have heard. My brother has just informed me of your preposterous demand."

"What was my demand?"

"My brother tells me you have made a demand for one half of his estate."

"His estate?" repeated the doctor.

"Yes, his estate."

"And you think my demand is preposterous?"

"I do."

"Madame, your brother may be willing to pay me all his estate when I give him certain information."

"Doctor, let me tell you something. I have some startling news for you all the same."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the doctor made his announcement, George Bindal and his sister exchanged glances. Both were pale, and betrayed signs of great inward agitation.

The doctor glanced around the room slowly, his glittering eyes glowing with an almost supernatural brightness.

"You have been betrayed!" he said.

"What do you mean?"

"A detective is on your track."

"If there is a detective moving in this matter, doctor, he is on your track!"

"I have had nothing to do with your operations."

The woman laughed in a semi-hysterical manner. She was evidently laboring under great excitement.

"I expected this, doctor."

"I did not."

"You don't understand me, Doctor Wadji."

"Possibly I do not. What would you have me understand?"

"I would have you understand that I expected the time would come when you would drop your mask."

"I have merely told you the truth, and if that is dropping a mask, I can not help it, Miss Bindal."

"How do you know a detective is on our track?"

"He has already been to talk with me."

"What did he say?"

"In some way he has learned that I was the doctor in attendance upon Charles and Alice."

"Very well; suppose you were? There has been no secret made of that fact."

"But we claimed the young lady died of a certain contagious disease."

"That was a matter for you to decide, doctor; you had both patients in charge."

The brightness in the doctor's eyes grew more intense as he answered:

"You are a wonderfully smart woman, Miss Bindal."

"I'm smart enough not to be terrorized by you, my good doctor."

"You are preparing to turn against me, Miss Bindal."

"I am only resolved that you shall not rob my brother. We are all liable to be arrested at any moment. We are ready to be arrested, doctor."

"In case you are arrested, what will you do?"

"Prove our innocence."

"Some one must be guilty, Miss Bindal."

"You must know, doctor; you had the patients in charge; if anything happened to them, it is your matter, not ours."

The doctor was silent a moment; again his strange eyes wandered all over the room. At length he spoke:

"Miss Bindal, it will not be safe for you to array yourselves against me."

"Doctor, we have no desire to array ourselves against you."

"Nor have I any desire to array myself against you."

"I may have been misled," said the woman.

"You certainly have been misled. I tell you our perils are common, and I would not come here with any idle tale."

"Has a detective really been to see you?"

"Yes."

"Who is the man?"

"I do not know. He is as secret as death. He is a dangerous man to be upon our track."

"Will you describe his appearance?"

The doctor described the appearance of his strange visitor as he looked after he had removed his female disguise.

The woman listened with dilated eyes; she had not described to the doctor the appearance of the mysterious man who had stood over the coffin; but in his description she recognized Old Sleuth.

"You had this man in your office, doctor?"

"Yes."

"Why did you, under all the circumstances, permit him to leave your place alive?"

The doctor told his story; related everything that had occurred; repeated his singular conversation with the detective verbatim, and graphically told how he had sought to make away with the enemy.

The woman listened with breathless attention.

The doctor told of the attempt to murder the detective in the cemetery.

At that moment the three conspirators received a terrible fright. They were all startled by a strange noise.

George Bindal leaped to his feet and drew a pistol; the woman uttered a startled ejaculation, but the doctor was as cool as an icicle.

"What could it have been?" asked Sara in a tremulous voice.

"I do not know."

"Can it be possible that some one is in the house?"

"Who is in the house?"

"Victor."

"Then go to Victor."

The necessity to go to Victor was overcome by the appearance of the giant.

"Were you in the hall a moment ago, Victor?"

"Yes."

"Ah, you made the noise?"

"I made no noise, and I came here to ask was any one else in the hall."

"No one."

"Then there is some one in the house. I passed some one in the darkness, I will swear."

"George," said Sara, "you must search the house."

George Bindal and Victor made a thorough search of the house from cellar to garret, but could find no trace of an intruder.

Returning to the parlor, the man reported it must be a mistake all round.

A few moments passed, and the conversation between the conspirators was resumed. Victor was placed outside the door as a sentinel.

The giant took his position at the door, and had been there but a few moments, when he heard a slight noise on the stairs leading down to the basement.

The negro did not notify any one of the noise, but proceeded down the stairs. As he descended he heard the sound of footsteps ahead of him.

The negro followed on. He was no coward, and relied upon his great strength. He entered the basement, and the next instant he reeled over insensible, and being caught in the arms of a dark figure, was gently lowered to the floor.

A moment later and he was helpless. He had been bound hand and foot, and gagged.

At a later period of our narrative we will explain how the giant negro was so deftly overcome and rendered helpless. Meantime, the conversation proceeded in the parlor between the schemers.

When both stories were concluded, the three conspirators sat a few moments in silence.

The doctor broke the silence with the remark:

"The man who stood over the coffin was the detective!"

"Yes. Who could have started this man upon our track?"

"Parthenia. She must have communicated with some one. And now the question arises, what shall we do?"

"Doctor, you can suggest a plan."

"The man must be removed."

"Yes."

"But, in the first place, I must have a guarantee."

Again sister and brother exchanged glances.

"What guarantee do you desire?"

"One hundred thousand dollars, cash down!"

The brother and sister gazed aghast.

"Your demand is preposterous!" declared Sara Bindal.

"What is the total value of the estate you gain?" demanded the doctor.

"About a hundred thousand dollars," came the answer.

"I know better than that. I know of one piece of property worth a quarter of a million. I know of bonds and cash amounting to over a million."

"I am not yet in possession of the estate," said George Bindal; "there are many legal formulas to be gone through with before I can handle one penny."

"You can raise one hundred thousand dollars?"

"I can not."

"You are walking on dangerous ground, George Bindal."

"How so?"

"You are making an enemy of me; succeed, and you lose all."

"Aha! you threaten us already?" exclaimed Sara.

"Yes; I threaten and I warn you; do not make an enemy of me. I will be content now with one hundred thousand dollars; to-morrow I may demand more."

"Your demand is refused."

"You forget I am in communication with the detective."

"Doctor, you are playing your game pretty well; and if you had some people to deal with you might frighten them; you can not frighten us. Do your worst. But first let me tell you that you and the detective are working together in one scheme."

"The detective is the only man I fear; were he out of the way I should demand a quarter of million; I may yet demand all."

"Doctor, we may as well understand each other. We will meet any consequences before we will accede to your demand."

"You are a very cunning woman; you have arranged all your plans nicely, and you have carried them out nicely, as far as you know; but you do not know all. I told you I was playing against all your little precautions, woman. Again, beware! Do not make an enemy of me!"

"If refusing to pay you one hundred thousand dollars makes an enemy of you, then we are enemies; for we refuse to pay the money."

"Have you made any discoveries lately?"

"Yes."

"What have you discovered, Miss Bindal?"

"That you are a treacherous, scheming man."

"I admit that I am; and now, to show how deep a schemer I am, I will ask you a question: Did you know that it had been discovered that the coffin was empty?"

"Yes, I knew it."

"What has become of the body, Miss Bindal?"

"Those who took it away can best answer that question."

"My statement does not appear to surprise you?"

"Not in the least. I anticipated such a statement. I calculated it would be a part of your game."

"What game could I have?"

"Oh, you might threaten us with a ghost!"

The doctor was thrown a little off his guard, and a curse fell from his lips.

The woman laughed, and said:

"We will not surrender, doctor, until we see the ghost."

"You think I am playing a bluff game?"

"Yes, I do."

"You will learn differently."

"We live to learn, doctor, dear."

The woman spoke in a jeering tone.
 "My offer is refused?"
 "Your offer is refused."
 "Very well; you will learn something within a few days that will make you regret your refusal."
 The doctor rose to take his departure.
 "Are you going?" asked Sara.
 "I am."
 "And you are going away angry?"
 "I have no more threats to make."
 "Remember, we do not repudiate your claim altogether."
 "Ah, you do recognize that there is something due me for my services?"
 "Yes."
 "How much, Miss Bindal?"
 "Twenty thousand dollars."
 "You will pay me twenty thousand dollars?"
 "Yes; when the estate is all settled up."
 "I want twenty thousand dollars now."
 The woman again indulged in one of her jeering laughs.
 "Doctor," she said, "we begin to understand each other."
 "I do not think we do."
 "You are not willing to wait for your money?"
 "I am not willing to wait."
 The doctor stepped to the door.
 "Will you declare that the girl lives?" Sara asked.
 "You know she was dead."
 "I do."
 "And yet the coffin is empty."
 "I repeat, I expected it would be."
 "Both coffins are empty."
 "Ah, you mean to bring forward two ghosts."
 "You know what was in the first coffin, Miss Bindal?"
 "The body of a man."
 "Yes, the body of a man. But you have forgotten that the Schuykill never gave up its dead."
 The last strange remark fell upon a pair of keen ears, as our readers will learn as our story progresses.
 "What would you insinuate?"
 "I insinuate nothing. I ask, What became of the body of Charles Brutone?"
 "Doctor, your double scheme is a failure."
 "Would you be surprised some day to see Charles Brutone appear before you?"
 "I would."
 "You do not admit the possibility that he may be living?"
 "In your imagination for the furtherance of your schemes only."
 "Very well, Miss Bindal, we will leave it at that; but the day may come when you will regret that you refused to pay me one hundred thousand dollars! You have made me your enemy!"
 "I do not desire your enmity, but I do wish you to act reasonably; when the estate is settled you shall be paid. Will you wait?"
 "I am compelled to wait."
 The doctor passed from the room, and the brother and sister were alone.
 "Sara," said George Bindal, "I am no coward, but I fear that man."
 "I do not fear him now; I did fear him."
 "He is our enemy."
 "He can not harm us. He has harmed himself."
 "How so?"
 "He will never receive one dollar from us."
 "Suppose the girl lives?"
 "She does not live. I anticipated he would play such a game, and that is why I made sure the body was removed. I would have removed it myself had he not got in ahead of me."
 "But remember the body of Charles was never discovered."
 "The fishes have devoured his body long before this."
 "Sister, we have only the word of the doctor as to the death of Charles. I was always afraid there was something wrong when he proposed palming off another body."
 Before the woman could reply, a shriek rang throughout the house.

CHAPTER IX.

GEORGE BINDAL and his sister stood and gazed at each other with starting eyeballs.
 A terrible silence followed. At length George asked in a husky voice:
 "What was it Sara?"
 "We will go and see what is the matter; the cry came from below stairs."
 George Bindal and his sister carried a light with them and descended the stairs. While proceeding they heard the cry once more, and Sara exclaimed:
 "It's Victor's voice; what can be the matter, I wonder?"
 A moment later and the mystery was solved.
 The two entered the basement, and there lay the giant negro upon the floor. He had managed to slip the gag from his mouth, but he was still helplessly bound. Handcuffs were on his wrists, and his feet were tied with a rope.
 George unbound the man's feet, and managed after awhile to remove the handcuffs.
 The giant negro was furiously mad.
 "Where is he?" the fellow demanded; and his eyes gleamed with a lurid light.
 Sara Bindal meantime stood aghast; terror at last had come to her wicked heart.
 "Come, Victor, tell us what has happened."
 "It was the man who stood over the coffin!" came the answer.

"Why didn't you notify me?"
 "I just started to see who made the noise. I followed the man down to the basement, when he clapped a handkerchief to my mouth and nose."
 "I thought you were a giant."
 "I am not a giant against chloroform."
 Sara had remained silent; she had stood by, a pale listener.
 "George," she said, "the doctor told the truth."
 "I thought so when he was telling his story."
 "I did not; but now I see our peril. We must not make an enemy of Doctor Wadji."
 "Sara, something must be done."
 "We can not act without the help of Wadji."
 "And you have made an enemy of him."
 "We can soon make a friend of him."
 "How?"
 "We will give him the twenty thousand."
 "Remember, I have no right as yet to draw from the funds of this estate."
 "You can borrow the money."
 The brother and sister then returned to the parlor.
 "George," said the latter, "we are in a desperate strait!"
 "Yes. It is strange who this man can be."
 "It is more than strange. He is a deeper man than the doctor. I now believe the doctor's story. Some terrible enemy is on our track."
 "If we could only see him once!"
 "We must see him. Wadji must manage it."
 "And then?"
 "Then we will be able to measure our peril. One life can not stand between us and success, now that we have the fortune in our very grasp."
 "No, Sara; I will go through at all costs."
 "And so will I. But I am sorry I offended Wadji."
 "He is as deep in the mud as we are in the mire. We will bring him around all right."
 Victor now came down-stairs, equipped for the street.
 "Bring the doctor with you, Victor, when you come back."
 "I will if he will come."
 "Tell him he must come," said George.
 Meantime, Old Sleuth had been playing one of his old-time games. It was the detective who had made the noise in the hall.
 The veteran, after his interview with Wadji, concluded that the doctor would seek an interview with his confederates, and he had managed to gain an entrance into the house, and had been lying in wait for his prey.
 The detective had overheard the whole of the conversation between George and Sara Bindal, and he had been listening to the talk after the conspirators had been joined by the doctor.
 The conversation between brother and sister opened many suggestions; but when the doctor appeared, he got points that aroused the most startling anticipations in his mind.
 The detective had supposed that, as a matter of course, the young man was dead—a victim of the assassins—but there had come a change over his suspicions, and he believed that the young man still lived.
 As to Alice, he did not question for one moment but that she was still a living, breathing girl, and he was well satisfied that she was in the hands of the doctor.
 Victor managed to see the doctor, and brought that dark-faced element of devilry back with him to the mansion, and once more the trio were assembled in the parlor.
 The brother and sister were seated alone, when the doctor, with his usual cat-like tread, entered the room.
 There was the same glitter in his eye, and his dark countenance wore the same imperturbable expression.
 "Why did you send for me?" he demanded.
 The woman made answer:
 "Doctor," she said, "we have been thinking over all you told us."
 "Ah! you have come to believe my story?"
 "We have come to believe that it is better, under all the circumstances, for us to remain friends. I am sorry I offended you."
 "The matter of offense does not enter into our affairs at all; it is simply a question of business. You and your brother set out to carry through a certain scheme; you engaged me to assist you. We arranged the price before I knew the real nature of the service required of me. The service has been rendered; the results warrant my demands."
 "We have concluded to accede to your demands."
 "It is no more than just."
 "We will pay you the twenty thousand dollars to-morrow."
 "Twenty thousand dollars!" ejaculated the doctor. "I demanded five times twenty."
 "But you agreed to take twenty."
 "I beg pardon; you mentioned the sum of twenty thousand, but you made the payment of even that sum conditional."
 "What is your demand now, doctor?"
 "One hundred thousand dollars."
 "If we give you the fifty thousand will you state all the facts?"
 "Yes."
 "Will you surrender the girl into our hands?"
 "I do not understand you, Miss Bindal."
 "Doctor we will talk plainly to each other; the girl lives!"
 "You are talking in enigmas," said the doctor.
 "You are well acquainted with all manner of potions; do you forget that you once told me that you possessed a secret whereby you could suspend animation for eight-and-forty hours?"
 "I do possess such a secret."
 "Now confess that Alice is not dead."

"You would suggest that I merely gave her one of those potions?"

"Yes."

"I did not; the girl is dead."

"I do not believe you."

"I can not help it."

"Surrender the girl, dead or alive, and you shall receive one hundred thousand dollars."

"You ask more than I can perform."

A moment the woman was silent and thoughtful. She was completely baffled.

"Will you surrender the girl?" asked Sara.

"I have already answered you; the demand calls for what I can not perform, and if it is for this you have called me here, I will go away," said the doctor.

George Bindal addressed his sister in the Spanish language. He said:

"We will pay the man the money."

"The hundred thousand dollars?"

"Yes."

"Never!"

"He will turn against us."

"No, brother, he shall not turn against us."

"How will you prevent him?"

"Kill him!"

"Not now!"

"Ah! the idea had entered your head?"

"Yes; but we must go slow; we will appease him for the present."

"How?"

"Give him the twenty thousand. We will tell him it is on account."

The woman had already conceived the idea of making the suggestion before her brother spoke.

Again speaking in English, and addressing the doctor, she said: "You know we can not command one hundred thousand dollars at present."

A smile played over the dark face of the doctor. He perceived that he had won the day.

"Can you give me security?"

"We will pay you twenty thousand on account."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"That will suit me; but you must keep your word and pay in cash."

The doctor once more took his departure.

When he had gone, George Bindal said:

"Sara, we have taken the right course."

"I hope so."

"You must change your tactics; you must not irritate the doctor. Once we find the girl, we will know how to act."

"I wish we had acted before we engaged that devil."

"It is too late to regret now; all we can do is mend matters, find the girl, and I will dispose of the doctor."

A dangerous gleam shone in George Bindal's eyes as he spoke. He was a quiet man, but dangerous when once aroused.

"How about the man who stood over the coffin?" asked Sara.

"We must set a trap for him."

"Thrice he has got the better of Victor."

"Have no fear; he will not get the better of me if we ever come face to face."

A few moments later brother and sister separated.

The sister retired to her room, not to sleep, but to plan. She had determined to remove the doctor.

George Bindal sat alone in the room.

The man was lost in deep thought. He sat with his hands over his face.

A few moments passed, and he was aroused by hearing a noise. He removed his hands, and beheld a man seated opposite him at the table.

George Bindal gazed aghast. His surprise was so great he sat speechless.

"Good-evening," said the stranger.

The man found voice.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am the wandering mystery."

"You have been in this house before?"

"Yes."

"You are the man who stood over the coffin?"

"I am."

"The man who chloroformed my servant?"

"I am."

"What do you want here?"

"I am here to meet you face to face."

George Bindal was a courageous man. He let his hand fall under the table. He had resolved to draw a weapon and make good his boast.

Sleuth did not prevent him; but when the man had grasped his pistol, our hero said:

"Do not use it, George; you will never speak again if you do."

George Bindal was overawed.

"I've a word to say to you," said the detective.

"I will summon the police. You are a robber. You have forced an entrance into my house."

"Summon the police if you choose; but first let me give you a little advice. Don't dispose of what don't belong to you," said Sleuth.

The man addressed made no reply.

"I will see you later," said Sleuth; and he rose and walked backward toward the door.

CHAPTER X.

GEORGE BINDAL did not move. The man was paralyzed.

Sleuth had done his work for that night. He had accomplished all he desired for the time being.

It was some time before George Bindal recovered from the shock he had received. When he did, he betrayed the fact with the exclamation.

"The man is the devil himself!"

The schemer rose from his seat and ascended the stairs to his sister's room. He knocked, and the query came:

"Who is there. You, George?"

"Yes."

"Come in."

The man entered the room. Sara Bindal had not retired. She was seated in a chair. She had been thinking and scheming. She was indeed a wonderful woman.

"I have had a visitor, Sara."

"Who visited you?"

"You remember my words, 'I would like to meet face to face the man who stood over the coffin'?"

"Yes."

"I have seen him."

"Where is he?"

"Gone."

"You let him go, George?"

"Sara, I was paralyzed."

"Where is your old-time courage, George?"

"I am courageous enough, Sara, when it's man to man; but when one comes face to face with the devil himself, it's different."

"Tell me about the meeting."

George Bindal related the startling incident.

"George, this is a relief."

"What is a relief?"

"The presence of your strange visitor."

"I don't see it in that light, Sara."

"I do; I see it all now, and my first impressions are confirmed."

"And what is your idea now?"

"George, that man is a confederate of Wadji. I know it now, and the doctor can go; two shall play at the game. He shall have some of his own medicine."

"I do not believe that man is a confederate of Wadji."

"Why not?"

"He was a listener to our conversation."

"How do you know?"

"We have absolute proof. Mark his words: 'Do not part with what is not your own.' He was speaking of the twenty thousand we promised Wadji."

"Yes," repeated the woman.

"Shall we give the money to Wadji?"

"Yes. It will inconvenience us, but it will lead that man on to show his full purpose."

"Suppose the man is Wadji's aid?"

"He is; there is no doubt about that."

"I hope all will come out right."

"Why? Are you disposed to surrender?"

"To surrender? No! Mark me, Sara, nothing will make me surrender. I will fight this thing to the bitter end—fight in the courts and out of the courts. I will— Well, never mind; I need not say what I will do; but of one fact you can rest assured: I will not surrender this money and live. I'll hang first!"

"Ah! now you talk like your mother's son. You will not hang, and you will not surrender the fortune!"

"I may hang. I'll take all the chances rather than surrender one dollar! Were Alice to appear before me at this moment, I would strangle her; and were Charles to appear, I would stab him to the heart without a word. I am sorry we resorted to the schemes we did. We should have made sure."

"We did make sure. Wadji is seeking to play upon our credulity, but he will find that I am a match for him. We will dispose of him and his assistant."

The brother and sister held a long talk together. Meantime, Old Sleuth was not idle; the detective was maturing his plans to close in on one of the most iniquitous schemes that ever engaged the attention of the police.

Upon the day following the incidents we have described, our hero was out bright and early.

The morning was far spent when the doctor issued from his den and proceeded to a restaurant or groggery in the upper part of the city.

Sleuth had got up in an entirely new disguise, and the keenest man would have failed to recognize in the gray-haired Irish laborer the peculiar-looking old fellow who had stood at the door listening to the talk of the conspirators the evening previous.

The groggery was a low place, a resort for foreigners from all parts of the globe.

Sleuth followed into the place after Wadji, and saw the doctor seat himself with two other men, who were seemingly waiting for him.

Our hero recognized the two men, despite their partial disguise, as the two thugs he had met at the tomb.

The doctor and the men held a long conversation in a language our hero did not understand.

The detective, however, watched their movements and curious gesticulations, and was able to form a remote idea as to the subject of their talk. Indeed, he learned that the men were talking about him, relating the scene in the cemetery where the attempt had been made upon his life, Oriental style.

Doctor Wadji did not remain long with the two men. He left them and proceeded down-town.

Sleuth guessed at the man's destination, and changed his rig-

The Irishman disappeared while our hero was crossing a waste piece of land, and a spruce-looking, well-to-do business man came forth.

Wadji proceeded down-town and entered a first-class wine-shop, one of the finest in the city, and he had been in the place but a few moments when he was joined by George Bindal.

The latter met the doctor in a very cordial manner, and discussed ordinary subjects for a few minutes, when the doctor asked:

"Did you come prepared to fulfill your promise?"

"It will take me some time to get the money."

"You have only to draw it from the bank."

"The bank will not recognize my check until the estate is settled up."

"This is a pretense," said the doctor; and the glitter in his eye became, as usual, brighter when excited.

"It is no pretense; I mean to pay you the money, all the same."

"When?"

"This very night."

"Where?"

"I will name a place where I will meet you and pay it over."

"You mean to fool me, George Bindal; but you are not going to succeed. Now, listen to me: I was engaged by you to prepare certain poisons. You told me you wished them for the purpose of making certain experiments."

"That is false!"

"George Bindal, I have witnesses; and you will remember that I did not with my own hand administer one of the poisons. I have witnesses that I did not. I am too old a man—I've had too great experience to do such things. I always keep within the bounds of the law."

George Bindal began to realize how skillfully and carefully the doctor had prepared for a retreat.

"You will remember," continued the doctor, "I am a regular compounder of insect poisons. I have a license for their disposal. I am not supposed to know that my decoctions are to be used for murderous purposes."

"Why do you tell me all this, sir?"

"Simply to let you know that a woman may sometimes over-reach herself. You are acting under instructions from your sister. She is an avaricious woman. She wishes to keep all the swag. She can't do it. I will have my share, or explode a mine."

"We have no intention to retain your share from you."

"Then pay over the money at once."

"I will meet you at my own house to-night."

"That will not do."

"I am expecting to raise the money on some jewels."

"You can raise it at once. Go now and get the amount. I will wait for you here."

"Can you not come to my house to-night?"

"No."

"Why?"

The glitter in the doctor's eyes again increased as he answered, with a cold smile upon his face:

"Your sister means to remove me."

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, I know she would not do such a thing! She has not already murdered two innocent young people! Oh, no! she is too soft and gentle to harm an old man like me; but I will not come to your house again, all the same."

"You will wait until to-night for the money?"

"No; you must go and get the money and bring it to me here."

"If I am unable to raise the money, what will you do, Wadji?"

"It is not necessary for me to tell you what I will do; but it is better for you to bring me the money."

George Bindal left the restaurant, and the doctor drew a paper from his pocket and commenced reading. It was evident he had concluded to await George Bindal's return.

Sleuth mentally commented, "I can wait also," and he drew a paper from his pocket and knocked for a waiter. He intended to eat a dinner and settle down for a quiet time.

Meantime, George Bindal returned to his home. His sister waited to receive him, and her face was working with excitement as she demanded:

"Is it all arranged?"

"No. That man suspects our purpose. He will not come to the house under any pretense whatever."

"Is that all? We can arrange to have him meet us at another house."

"No; I tell you he suspects that we are alluring him to murder him."

The sister was silent for a moment. At length she said:

"I wish I had gone to meet him; you know I can make up for George Bindal."

"Yes; but not for Wadji. You are not dealing with an ordinary man; it is useless to think of that game."

"But something must be done. With what understanding did you leave him?"

"I was to return in two hours or less with the money."

"You shall not!"

"Listen! That man has played a deeper game than you suspect."

"He has?"

"Yes. Let me tell you he has witnesses that he prepared some poison at my request."

"That amounts to nothing."

"But his witnesses will swear it is true. And he has witnesses to prove that he did not administer the medicine."

The woman trembled visibly as she answered in a husky voice:

"George, do you not see the necessity now?"

"What necessity?"

"That doctor holds your sister's life in his hands. We must silence his secret forever!"

"He must have the money; the payment of the money will gain us time. What would you suggest?"

"Take all the chances. For the present, under no circumstances pay him the money; compel him to wait until to-morrow."

"I will act under your advice."

Sara Bindal had resolved upon the performance of a desperate act. She was a desperate woman. Her ambition to become a duchess overcame and overshadowed every other element in her nature.

George Bindal had not been gone an hour when he returned to the restaurant where Wadji awaited him.

"Did you bring the money?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I can not raise it at once. I need time."

"How much time?"

"I may have it to-morrow."

A shadow passed over the doctor's face, and his glittering eyes shone with increased brilliancy.

"Have you seen your sister since you left me?"

"Yes."

"Ah, I thought so. Your sister says you shall not pay the money."

"I can not raise it."

"She will not lend her jewels?" said the doctor in a sarcastic tone.

"It is enough that I can not raise the money to-day."

"Will you meet me here to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Bring the money when you come. Good-day."

The doctor rose from his seat and hurriedly left the restaurant. Sleuth was at his heels.

The doctor went down-town and entered a shipping-office.

Sleuth followed.

The detective engaged a clerk in the office in conversation, while Doctor Wadji made inquiries as to the whereabouts of a certain captain.

He was informed that the captain was not in.

"When will he be here?"

"At any moment he may come."

"When he comes, tell him a friend wishes to see him. I will wait for him at —"

The doctor named the same restaurant where he had held the conversation with George Bindal.

"Aha!" thought Sleuth, "the plot deepens. On, ye conspirators; you are rushing into the clutches of the law!"

Our hero began to see his way clear. He had at length caught on to a clew which was confirmatory of his original theory.

When Sleuth reappeared upon the street he had worked another transformation, and as an old man he a few moments later entered the same restaurant where he had been while the interview between Bindal and the doctor was transpiring.

While the veteran is waiting for points, we will ask our reader's attention while we indulge a brief retrospect.

Doctor Wadji had been engaged for a stipulated sum to become a confederate in a certain scheme. He had not been made a confidant at the start; but the doctor was a cunning man, and he speedily commanded the confidence which had been originally withheld.

The doctor demanded to see both the intended victims, and when his eyes fell upon Alice Fairfax, he conceived upon the instant a violent passion for her, and at once his fertile brain conceived a deep design for making the girl his own.

As our readers have already been informed, he was an adept in the compounding of drugs. The man had once held high power in his native land. He had been rich, and was the favorite of a native prince, who had showered every favor upon him.

The doctor became enamored of a beautiful princess, and became a murderer to prepare the way for becoming a successful wooer. His scheme failed, and he was compelled to fly for his life. The man fled to England, where he remained a number of years, until the police were started upon his track, when he fled to the United States.

He played a deep game, and arranged all the minor details for the carrying out of a most startling and thrilling scheme.

The drug was administered to Alice at the proper moment—a drug which suspends all outward signs of life.

It was the doctor who had suggested the small-pox scheme. He knew how to play on the terror of the public.

His first game was to get all the servants out of the house, and the moment the nature of the disease was announced they were all glad to accept the balance of a month's wages and leave.

Once rid of the servants, the road was clear.

The taking off of Charles will be narrated in future chapters, but the administering of the potion to Alice is a matter which we propose to make plain at once.

Parthenia was selected to administer what she supposed was the fatal poison.

At the time, as Alice drank off the dose, she appeared to be struck with the consciousness that she had been murdered, and the beautiful girl folded her arms and murmured, as she fell back:

"'Tis well!"

CHAPTER XI.

PARTHENIA had been instructed as to how she should perform her part, and she exclaimed, in a tone of well-simulated surprise:

"Oh, Alice, dear, I have made a mistake! I have given you a

medicine Charles prepared for you a few days before he was taken sick."

A look of agony passed over the face of Alice, and she closed her eyes, and a few moments later the drug did its work.

Parthenia thought the girl was dead, believed herself a murderess, and in that moment a feeling of remorse came over her. She became frantic with grief, and in the end terminated her life as described in the opening chapters of our narrative.

As our readers will recollect, Sleuth, by the merest chance, happened to be a witness of the self-murder, and secured the tell-tale missive.

The girl had been under the influence of the drug but a few hours when the detective stood over the coffin.

Sara Bindal played her game out well. She covered the face of the dead woman, saying, as an excuse, that her appearance was too horrible for human eyes to behold; and when the undertaker came she stated that the girl was prepared for immediate interment, and all the undertaker had to do was to place the body in the casket.

Sara afterward removed the covering from the face. A weird suspicion entered her mind, and thus it was that Sleuth saw the beautiful face of the supposed dead girl.

Meantime, as stated, Doctor Wadji had prepared all his plans. The body was carried to the tomb. The circumstances of the funeral have been described.

At an earlier hour than Sleuth's visit to the tomb, a close carriage drove into the cemetery, and three men alighted.

They proceeded direct to the Brutone vault. One of them opened the coffin, the body of the girl was removed and carried to the carriage, and the latter was driven to a house which will be described as our story progresses.

The doctor had played his game successfully. The supposed dead girl was in his power, and no one knew better than he how to apply the proper antidotes for her restoration.

Doctor Wadji led two lives in the city of Philadelphia. He was a herb doctor in one place, where he lived and moved under a disguise, but with his real name. He was a retired physician at another place, where he moved without disguise save in the name.

A short distance from the city, and on the banks of the Schuylkill, the doctor owned a lovely villa, and within that villa scenes of villainy had occurred which, if described, would fill the reader's soul with horror.

It was to this villa the ghoul had carried the lovely intended victim he had stolen from the tomb.

The doctor could calculate to within an hour when the effects of the potion would wear off, and the unnatural sleep be broken, and with a mind gloating in triumph, he awaited the minute when those lovely eyes would open and gaze with gratitude upon her deliverer.

At length the signs increased, and the doctor applied smelling-salts to the nostrils, and soon life returned; the unnatural sleep was broken, and she who had appeared dead once more awoke to life.

"Where am I?" she demanded.

"Ah, you are better! You live?"

"Have I been sick?"

"My dear child, you are not strong enough now to hear the truth."

A shudder passed over the girl's delicate frame.

"I am strong enough to hear the truth."

"You have been as one that was dead!"

"I do not understand you, doctor."

"You owe your life to me. I am your deliverer. I have defeated one of the most damnable schemes ever conceived against the life of an innocent and helpless girl."

The doctor had set out to create an immediate impression in his favor.

At the same instant a terrible recollection flashed over the girl's memory.

Her face assumed a ghastly hue.

"Doctor, have I been dreaming?"

"Yes; thanks to me, you have been only dreaming."

"Charles is not untrue?"

A shadow came over the doctor's face.

"Charles is a villain, an assassin," he said.

"Oh, doctor, then it was not all a dream?"

"No; it was not all a dream."

"I remember, I drank at the hands of Parthenia. She gave me a poisoned draught; she said it had been prepared by Charles for me."

"She did not tell you truly."

"Charles did not prepare the draught?"

"He did not."

"Who did?"

"I did."

When the doctor made the startling confession, the fair girl leaped up from her reclining attitude and gazed at the man with dilated eyes, a look of horror upon her face.

"Doctor, you prepared the poison?"

"Yes; but it was not a fatal poison."

"I do not understand."

"Are you strong enough to listen to the whole terrible tale?"

"I am."

"Your step-cousin and his sister are murderers and assassins, and Charles Brutone is no better!"

"Oh, doctor, do not proceed with your tale!"

"Let me tell you all."

"Tell me nothing of Charles; he is dead."

"Your cousin Charles is not dead."

A complete change came over the face of Alice Fairfax; all the softness went out of it; she was within a moment transformed into a stern woman. She became as a woman scorned.

"They told me he was dead."

"It was all a part of the scheme to rob you of your share of the fortune."

"And Charles was a party to the scheme?"

"He was."

"Why?"

"Charles Brutone is a gambler and a *roué*. He owes thousands of dollars of money. He has always laughed at you as a prude, and has openly cursed the conditions of the will that made it obligatory for him to marry you in order to inherit."

"Doctor, why should I believe you when so many others have told me false tales?"

"I have a revelation to make in time which will convince you that I am telling the truth."

"But you admit having prepared the poison?"

"Yes; to save your life."

"Will you please explain?"

"Yes; but first listen to the story I have to tell. Charles Brutone hated you from the first, while pretending to love you. He would have told you of his hatred had it not been for a subtle woman who controlled him."

"Who is the woman?"

"Sara Bindal."

"Does Charles love her?"

"She is his wife."

"No, no; this can not be!"

"Listen: the woman, knowing he was an unprincipled young man, and the heir to a large fortune, charmed him."

"Poor Charles!" muttered Alice.

"No; you need waste no sympathy on Charles. You will learn what a wretch he is when my tale is concluded."

"I never will!"

"When you learn all the truth you will think differently. Sara once married to Charles, you were the only obstacle; you out of the way, and he would be the sole heir. Therefore, he pretended to love you when he really intended to murder you."

"And that was his purpose from the first?"

"Yes. I now come to the important revelation. Charles came to me and asked for a poison. I at once suspected his purpose. I demanded to know for what purpose he wanted the drug, and he told me he was experimenting in its uses and abuses."

"Sara once told me all that you are telling me now."

"She had a purpose."

"And you may have a purpose, doctor. I have lost confidence in every one."

"I have no selfish purpose, as you will learn. But let me proceed. I suspected, as I told you, Charles' real purpose, and I determined to save your life."

"If what you tell me is the truth, I am glad you did."

"Yes; it was just and right that such awful wickedness should be defeated. I am acquainted with many secrets in poisons, and I know a drug which will suspend all animation and signs of life for a season. I did not give Charles the poison; I gave him a potion."

"And it was the potion you prepared Parthenia gave me?"

"Yes. She was the only one among them who knew what goodness or mercy meant. And, let me tell you, Charles, Sara, and George believed you were dead. I was the only one who knew the real truth."

The girl remained silent a moment, and then a look of ghastly horror came over her face as she demanded:

"Have I been in a coffin?"

"Yes; and I have just brought you from the grave."

The girl was struck speechless; dark shadows rose before her eyes; horror had struck her very soul. They were terrible words the doctor had uttered: "I have just brought you from the grave."

"Oh, doctor!" she murmured, "it is not true that I have been in the grave?"

"No, not buried; you were placed in the vault in which reposes the remains of the ancestors of your race, and it was from the vault I rescued you. I was watching over you all the time. I but bided my chance to restore you to life and consciousness, and now you are safe!"

The doctor assumed a honeyed tone, and there was a rich melody in his voice, even a benevolent glance in his glittering black eyes.

"What shall I do now, doctor? Where shall I go?" cried Alice.

"I will protect you. I will shield you until such time as I can secure your fortune, and then you shall become my daughter. I will take you from this land, and together we will travel over the world. I will be your instructor and guide."

The doctor proceeded and described all the wonders that were to be seen across the great waters. His descriptions were vivid and fascinating, and the cunning man, knowing well the girl's nature, threw a religious fervor into his language.

Alice was an inexperienced child, and she had been taught to venerate age. She already began to look upon the dark-faced schemer as not only her deliverer, but a father. Indeed, she became an easy victim to the spell that was being thrown around her.

Under the potency of his tricks and devices, mental and mechanical, she became, as it were, his charmed slave; and all this had been accomplished since his rescue of the betrayed girl from the tomb.

Thus matters stood while the scenes were progressing as described by us in preceding chapters.

Our readers will remember that Sleuth was on the track of Wadji. The detective became convinced that the beautiful Alice lived, and that she was held a prisoner by the man who had prepared the potion which had thrown her into the unnatural sleep which permitted of her being entombed.

The detective had tracked his man from point to point, had witnessed his interview with George Bindal, and had been present during the inquiry at the shipping-office; and then, after a trans-

form, as our readers will remember, he returned to the restaurant to await developments.

The veteran detective was not compelled to wait long; his man soon appeared in the person of Wadji.

Half an hour passed, when a sea-faring man entered the restaurant. The latter was neither an American nor an Englishman, but some species of East Indian half breed.

A warm greeting passed between Wadji and the sailor, and Sleuth was once more at fault, as the men spoke in a language he could not understand.

Our hero, however, was not beaten altogether, as he managed to ascertain that the captain's name was Jamma, and that the name of his vessel was the "Spolka."

Wadji and the captain remained in consultation over an hour, when they separated.

The detective concluded to pipe the captain; he could find the doctor any time.

Captain Jamma, as it turned out, was quite a man about town. He spoke English like a native, and was evidently entirely European in all his habits and personal tastes.

He visited several drinking-places, and dropped into a notorious gambling-parlor, and at all the several places he appeared to be perfectly at home.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING Sleuth's piping he had changed his appearance several times, and his trail had been close.

Sleuth had reduced the art of change down to a science, and was able to perform the most wonderful transformations in a moment.

The detective had practiced the art in following Captain Jamma, and, as intimated, managed to secure a clew to the man's identity.

The captain was engaged in a game of faro, when our hero, in his peculiarly indifferent manner, made some inquiries, and learned that the captain was reported to be a slave dealer—a man who made piles of money, and spent it as easily as he made it.

The doctor had proceeded to the house by the river.

As intimated in a previous chapter, the house named was an abode of comfort and luxury.

Wadji had a keeper for his fair Alice, an Indian woman who was possessed of the most snake-like qualities. She owed her life to her master, and was seemingly devoted to his interests. If there was one being on earth whom the doctor implicitly trusted it was the woman Ola, who had always given evidence of belonging to him and his interests body and soul.

Ola's orders were never to lose sight of her charge for one moment day or night.

Wadji, during the short time Alice had been under his control, had led her to believe that her life depended upon her remaining undiscovered. He made her think that her enemies believed her dead. He felt so much confidence in his power over her that he had instructed Ola to take her for an airing in the grounds surrounding the villa, making it a condition that Alice should wear a heavy veil.

The schemer had two purposes to serve in sending his charge out to walk. He made her think he was really disinterested in one sense, and really interested as concerned her health.

When Doctor Wadji entered his house he went to the apartments occupied by Alice, and had a conversation with her regarding her cousin Charles.

Alice mentioned that Charles was ever true to her, while the doctor represented him as the greatest monster on earth, and as the doctor's ideas coincided with Sara Bindal's, the poor girl was led to believe—much as she loved Charles—that he was not worthy of the trust she placed in him.

The doctor came to the conclusion, when he saw Alice so ready to believe in her cousin's loyalty, that somebody had been endeavoring to place him in a bad light.

For a time the doctor was at a loss to discover who it was that had been posting Alice.

Surely it could not have been Ola. Who, then, had done it? Immediately he thought of Alca, the Indian youth—deaf and dumb presumably—who would do anything for him, and who was a spy or overseer in the house where he had concealed Alice. He determined to summon Alca and find out what he knew.

The doctor went to one corner of the room and touched a button; and, a moment later, a lithe, active, dark-faced, black-eyed, turbaned youth entered the room.

The doctor addressed the youth in an unknown tongue; but we will take the author's privilege and narrate the conversation in English.

"You are here, Alca?"

"I am here."

"You have been always on the watch?"

"Always."

"Ola and the American went to walk in the grounds to-day?"

"Yes."

"Have you heard them talk?"

"I have seen them. They talk in a language I do not understand."

"You have never lost sight of either of them?"

"Never."

"You have always been prepared?"

"Yes. Had Ola meant evil, she would have died!"

Upon the following morning, when the sunlight gleamed through the windows of that house of mystery, Doctor Wadji was early moving about, and later on he was summoned to the breakfast which had been prepared for him by the deft hands of Ola.

The Indian lad Alca waited upon the doctor; but Ola was in the room, preparing the meal which she was to carry up to Alice.

The eyes of the doctor were upon the woman, and he still sat at

the table when the woman returned, after having carried up the breakfast to the beautiful Alice.

"Come with me, Ola," he said.

The woman followed the doctor to the library.

"You have taken your patient to walk?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Have you been able to communicate with the girl? Can you make her understand your pantomime readily?"

"We conversed together. I discovered that the girl spoke French, and I let her know that I conversed in the same language."

"With what result?"

"She is very deep—she is very cunning."

"Indeed? I did not think so."

"The girl suspects you are her arch-enemy."

"From whence arose her suspicion?"

"I do not know; but last night, after your interview with her, she awoke me from sleep, and bid me go follow you."

"Why did she bid you watch me? She must consider you her friend."

"She does."

"How did you manage to win her confidence?"

"By pretending to be against you. I recognized that she distrusted you, and I knew the best way to gain her confidence was to appear to hate you."

The doctor was thoughtful a moment. He pretended to be looking out of the window; but he was really studying the face of Ola by the aid of a curious little microscopic instrument which he had concealed in the palm of his hand.

"And she has given you her confidence?"

"Yes."

"What is her purpose? Does she desire to escape from me?"

"No; not now; she mistrusts you; she appears to think it possible that you may be her friend. She has said to me: 'If he is my friend, how I have wronged him! And should I learn that all he says is true, how I will love him!'"

After an interval of deep thought, the doctor said:

"Ola, you are true and faithful, and you shall meet with a glorious reward."

"I know that."

"You do? Why are you so confident?"

"I know that in the same measure as you are terrible to your enemies, you are faithful to your friends."

"You have truly read me, Ola; and now, Ola, I charge you not to take the young lady to walk to-day."

"Your orders are law to me."

The woman left the room.

Again the doctor was alone. His eyes wandered around the room, and soon his lips unclosed, and they muttered:

"I do not know just what to think; that woman appeared open and frank, and yet sometimes there is design in openness and frankness. If she is really true to me, why should I doubt her? She is invaluable; but if she is false—and again, why should I doubt her?—she might ruin me! Well, well, whoever intends to harm me now must act quickly. I get that money to-day, and to-morrow I will be far away; yes, so far that I need not fear the mystery, nor need I fear Ola or Alca. I will leave them both to beg, starve, or steal."

The last remark proved what a cold-blooded, heartless wretch the doctor was at bottom, after all.

Meantime, Ola had returned to the room where Alice sat reading. The girl had been provided with every comfort during her brief sojourn in that house of mystery.

When Ola entered the room, Alice looked up from her book, and demanded:

"What have you to tell me?"

The woman placed her fingers to her lips as a sign for the fair girl to be cautious and silent.

The woman, at the moment, had made a certain startling discovery.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE woman had chanced to glance toward the door opening from the room into the hall, and as she did so, she saw daylight shine through the key-hole. Suddenly, and in an instant later, the free passage of light was stopped.

The woman had long suspected that Alca was but a spy, and at last she had made sure of the fact.

Later on the woman secured an opportunity to speak to Alice, when the youth was not around.

"It is as I suspected," she said; "every movement of mine is watched. Alca is a spy!"

"Who is Alca?"

Alice had never seen the sharp-eyed Indian youth.

"He is a creature of that wretch Wadji!"

"And he is watching you?"

"Yes. It is strange. I have seemed for years to be the doctor's slave. I have acted all these years with a purpose. I have sought to gain his confidence, that in the end might destroy him!"

"If you hate him so, why did you ever enter his service?"

"Alice, I will tell you my story, although I have never confided before in a human being. I have lived in America, England, and France; secretly I have learned the two languages."

"You have never spoken to me in English?"

"No; I speak French much better, and I did not wish to betray the fact that I spoke English. Wadji did not know that I speak French until I told him quite recently. When I was a young girl in India, I attended a missionary school and learned to read and write. Wadji does not know that I can do either; and during my residence in Europe and America, as his slave, I have

learned much; secretly I have obtained possession of books, and secretly I have read them, and all these years I have waited for an opportunity to destroy Wadji!"

"Why have you sought to destroy him?"

"I once had a lover, a young native East Indian merchant. We were to have been married, but on the wedding-night he was murdered by the thugs!"

"Why was he murdered?"

"I have never learned why he was murdered, but I have learned that he was killed at the instigation of Doctor Wadji. My lover was the possessor of a sacred relic, a precious stone possessed of wonderful qualities; it may have been to obtain possession of that stone that the doctor murdered him!"

"If you knew the doctor was the murderer, why did you not have him punished for the crime in your own country?"

"My country is not like America; and again, I had no proof that Wadji was the assassin—that is, not proof that would have amounted to anything as evidence before one of the English judges; but I possessed the moral proof of his guilt, and in following him all these years I have but been carrying out a sacred behest. Just previous to my lover's death, he appeared to have a premonition that some evil would befall him, and he showed me the sacred jewel, and he told me that should he die and lose possession of it, his soul would suffer eternal torment. You know our religion is not like yours; but it is enough that on my bended knees—indeed, with my forehead buried in the palms of my lover's hands, I swore to recover that jewel at all hazards, in case anything should happen to him."

"Why did your lover retain possession of the jewel?" innocently asked Alice.

"I will tell you. My lover, under a sacred oath, was bound to retain possession of the magic jewel for a certain length of time only. On the day following his marriage to me, it was to pass from his possession; but that night he was murdered, and when I, frantic with grief and terror, searched his murdered form, I discovered the stone had been taken."

"Has Wadji got possession of the jewel?"

"During all these years I have never been able to find it. Had I recovered the magic jewel, he would not have lived an hour—no, not one minute!"

"How long have you been upon his track?"

"I have been fifteen years in his service."

"You have now given up all idea of ever finding the magic jewel?"

"I have not given up all hope of finding the jewel. I shall find it, with your aid."

"How can I help you?"

"I have had a vision. When you were placed under my charge, I was prepared to perform the doctor's will toward you. I cared nothing for you; all I cared for was to recover the jewel, and I was still the doctor's slave, ready to do his will until the hour should come; but I was directed to save you."

"By whom?"

"My lover appeared to me in a vision, commanded me to save you, and told me that in saving you I would recover the magic jewel."

Silence followed the last statement of the woman Ola.

It was toward evening, and the sun shone in through the window and illumined the strange creature's dark face, giving her an almost supernatural expression.

"Will you aid me to escape from this man?" asked Alice.

"The time has not come for you to escape. You have told me your story. We do not know yet whether it would be safe to let you go from here. Listen: I believe that the doctor's story is true—that your relatives sought to take your life. They believe you dead. I am certain the doctor saved your life; but, alas! for his own purpose."

"What is his purpose?" demanded Alice in a low, fearful tone.

"He loves you."

"It can't be possible!"

"Strange as it may appear, he worships you. I know it; and his love is your safety."

"My safety? No, no!"

"Yes, yes! It is your safety, or long ere this he would have destroyed you. But now he will not harm you; the fiend means to charm you—means to win your love. He will make you a voluntary bride."

"Never! I would kill myself first!"

"Hold! Make no rash threats. You will never be his bride; but, as I said, his love is your safety. He would allure from you love in return."

"Oh! what shall I do?" murmured Alice.

"Make him think that you may love him."

The girl recoiled in horror, and exclaimed:

"Never!"

"Listen to me. Doctor Wadji is a human fiend; but he possesses two secrets—one is all in all to me; the other, all in all to you."

"I do not understand."

"He holds the magic jewel."

"Ah! you would have me throw myself away that you may recover your jewel?"

"No, you shall do nothing for me. I will do all for you—but you can do something for yourself."

"What can I do but die?"

"You can save the life of Charles Brutone!"

Alice uttered a startled scream, when Ola sprung toward her, and clapped her tawny hand over the fair girl's lips.

"Is Charles Brutone in that man's power?"

"I have not as yet made sure of all I really suspect; what I said to you was merely presented as a possibility. My suspicions are

only at present founded on stray expressions I have heard fall from the doctor's lips."

"And what would his expressions suggest?"

"That he has another prisoner in his power."

Alice was thrilled to the very heart.

"Will you tell me why you think Charles is a prisoner?"

"Wait until I have more positive information. With your assistance I will learn something this very night."

"I will do anything—brave anything."

"Good! With your aid I will risk much; but I hope to obtain some positive information."

"When?"

"This very night; and now listen. See here."

The woman showed Alice a small but tough rope.

"What is that?"

"Some of the material of which the thug makes his strangling-rope."

"Horrible!"

"Oh, no, not to me; but to you, yes. Now listen: do you see this knife?"

"Yes."

"Try and see if you can cut that rope with it."

Alice made the attempt, and succeeded.

Ola smiled; it was a rare incident for the creature to smile, but the innocence of lovely Alice did bring a smile even to the dark face of Ola.

"You have read of the terrible thugs of India?"

"Yes."

"Doctor Wadji has thugs in his employ."

"This is terrible!" murmured Alice, as a shudder passed over her form.

"Yes, it is terrible; and now see here."

The woman threw a noose over the fair shoulders of Alice and pulled; the fair girl screamed. At that moment it flashed across her mind that in that house of mystery she was to be strangled.

"Hush! Do not scream, child; you have the knife."

Instinctively, Alice raised the knife and severed the rope.

"Ah! that is it; now you will know what to do in an emergency."

"Why do you tell me this?" demanded the girl. "Do you fear I am to be strangled?"

"No; you are safe. I am in danger, and you may save my life."

Ola later on explained more fully all her plans to Alice, and when she had concluded, asked:

"Do you think I can rely upon you?"

"Yes."

"You will not get frightened?"

"I will not get frightened."

"Remember, there is no other way. That keen-eyed devil must be held spell-bound."

Alice was deathly pale, but there was a resolute expression upon her beautiful face.

In a low voice she said:

"You may be mistaken."

"I am not mistaken, Alice. You are beautiful. With your eyes you could charm an ogre; but I have watched; I have discovered Alca is fairly maddened with passion. The boy has the Indian blood; his love has become a madness, but you can control him and hold him at your bidding. It is only for a few hours, and in that few hours I may accomplish much more than you dream, and there is no other way for me to escape from this house. Alca watches every move I make; but, under the spell of your eyes, he will be lured from his vigil."

"But he does not speak; he is deaf and dumb."

"You can make him speak. I am sure he is not deaf and dumb, although he has played the rôle for years."

"Even should he speak, it would be in a tongue I would not understand."

"Love can speak by signs; even the tiger can throw the language of love into its fierce eyes; the wild Arab of the desert could woo the fairest maid in Christendom. No, no, you need not fear; you are but to let him watch you, and smile upon him occasionally during a few hours, and all will be well; but I warn you that it is necessary that you should be cool and brave."

It will be observed from the foregoing conversation, that Alice had made a full confidante of the woman Ola.

Alice had not told Ola of the incident connected with the poisoned glass of lemonade. The latter was the only horror the girl could not remove from her mind. She told the story to Ola, and when her narrative was completed, Ola said:

"It would appear that there are others as deep and cunning as Wadji."

"You do not believe," demanded Alice, "that my cousin prepared a poisoned drink for me?"

"Believe it, child? Why, certainly not! The story carries its own proof. This woman, Bindal, arranged to have it appear that your cousin prepared the lemonade."

"I do not believe that Charles had anything to do with it; and yet I could never explain away the horror."

"Why, child, the actions of the woman prove that the whole affair was concocted to throw suspicion upon an innocent person. I will show you."

Ola proceeded in a lawyer-like manner to demonstrate how the weight of evidence favored the theory of her cousin's innocence.

"When will you go and make your discoveries?" asked Alice.

"This very night."

"And I am to play the charmer?"

"Yes. I will send Alca with some refreshment to you at once, and you must try the effect of your charms. I will watch, and when I see that you are succeeding, I will steal away. But remember, Alice, at all hazards you must keep him engaged; you must

play at dalliance with him until I return. Should he leave this room and discover my absence, it would be death to me—my doom would be sealed. Let two facts give you nerve and strength: you are playing for the establishment of your lover's innocence, and you will be playing for a life."

A moment the two women stood and gazed into each other's eyes. Indeed, it was a fearful tragedy that was being suggested at that moment.

"Alice," said Ola, "it is life and liberty and the innocence of your cousin which are at stake."

CHAPTER XIV.

"The end will not justify the means, Ola. Can we not attempt some other plan?"

"What other plan can you suggest, Alice?"

"What is it you wish to do to-night?"

"I wish to visit Sara Bindal."

"Do you know where to find her?"

"Yes. I will do something I never did before. I will turn traitor. I will break an oath. Doctor Wadji once took me to that house. He is, as you know, one of the deepest of men. He feared that the day might come when it would be necessary to have certain witnesses. I was secretly introduced into that house. I saw you; I saw Sara Bindal; I saw her brother; they did not know I was in the house. Sara Bindal was plotting, and Wadji was counterplotting."

"I have a plan, Ola. We will both go."

"Both go? Why, that would be inviting death!"

"We need never return."

"Child, I am willing to risk my life to aid you, but I can not desert Wadji."

"Why not? You hate him. He is your enemy; he would kill you."

"But he is the possessor of the magic jewel. If I had the jewel I would go with you; I would defy him. Yes, I would have killed him years ago; but I can not kill him as long as he possesses one certain knowledge which is still a secret from me. I must yet learn where the magic jewel is deposited."

"But since after fifteen years you have failed to gain the knowledge, why do you still hope?"

"Did I not tell you of my dream?"

"According to your dream, you were to gain the magic jewel by saving me."

"Yes; no harm can come to you, else I would not propose to leave you. I must go alone to visit Sara Bindal. I must steal into that house. I must move around like a snake; and, like a snake, I must have my fangs ready to strike in a moment of danger."

"And there is no other method than for me to charm Alca?"

"I can not leave the house and return in safety unless he is drawn off his vigil."

"I will take the risk," said Alice in a resolute tone.

The woman held toward the girl a vial of deadly poison.

"No, I will not take that."

"Listen. You may need it for your protection some other time, should anything happen to me. I do not fear for you from the boy Alca, but it may save you from Wadji. We can never tell what may happen."

"Ah! I understand," said Alice; and she took the fatal drug.

"I go to send Alca to you. But first we will arrange a signal, so you will know when I go and come."

The woman instructed Alice as to a signal, and, after some final directions, she left the room.

Twenty minutes passed, and Alice occupied the time pacing to and fro across the apartment.

Soon her thoughts found expression in murmurings.

Her walk continued, and soon from her pocket she took the fatal drug. She gazed with starting eyes at the liquid, and again her thoughts found utterance.

"Alas! I fear this will be the end. This is not for Wadji nor for Alca; it is for me."

Her soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Alca.

The youth placed the refreshments on the stand near the beautiful girl, and stood like one transfixed gazing upon her beautiful face. It was a terrible moment. Alca was charmed. He appeared unable to move away. Those eyes of the Christian maiden held him, as it were, spell-bound.

"Would I could hold him thus helpless!" was the thought that flashed through the mind of Alice. But, alas! she knew that she could not. Already she experienced the necessity of doing something to break the fixed glance of the glittering and fascinating orbs of the Indian.

Relief came at last.

The Indian, with a sigh, turned to go away. He took one step toward the door.

The spell was broken. Alice suddenly realized the peril, as at the moment there came to her the signal from Ola:

"I go."

The girl felt inclined to scream, to call out, "Come back!" Her lips were formed to utter the call, when again there came to her mind a realization of the consequences.

Something must be done. If Alca crossed that threshold and the door closed, all was lost!

Alice crossed the room like a fitting sunbeam, and laid her hand upon the Indian boy's shoulder, and forgetting for the moment that he was a pretended mute, and that at best he could not speak her language, she exclaimed in an earnest voice:

"Do not go away!"

The youth turned round. There was such a fierce flaming light in his eyes that Alice fairly recoiled in terror.

It seemed to her as though the power of her touch and words

had been magical indeed; it appeared as though the Indian had suddenly acquired a sound hearing and a thorough understanding of the English tongue. He exclaimed, in broken English:

"The American lady is beautiful! Alca loves her with all his heart!"

A startling contingency had presented itself of which neither Ola nor Alice had dreamed.

The fair girl had been informed that the Indian was not a mute; and he himself had confessed to Doctor Wadji that he did not understand what passed between Ola and Alice because they spoke in French; but, strange to tell, the Indian had learned English. When, how, and where, no one could tell; but it was reserved for Alice to first learn that he possessed the accomplishment.

When the Indian spoke, and after she had recovered from the first shock of surprise, she exclaimed:

"What! does Alca talk my language?"

"Yes."

"Alca is bright and smart to have learned to speak English; but he has made a secret of his accomplishment."

"No one knows Alca speaks English."

"Does not Doctor Wadji know it?"

"No."

"I must tell him what a wonderful boy you are."

"Alice must not tell Wadji."

"Yes, I must tell him."

"No; he must not know."

"Then you must tell me why."

"He will kill me."

"Why would he kill you?"

"Alca does not know Wadji."

The Indian had progressed to calling the fair girl by her Christian name.

"The doctor would not dare kill you, Alca. You must remember you are in America. A man dare not kill his servant in this land."

The Indian had made a pantomimic motion with his hands; indeed, went through all the motions illustrative of the thug art, and said:

"Wadji don't care, he kills in secret."

"I will make him promise he will not kill you."

Alca shook his head, and said:

"No, no; you shall not!"

"I will though," answered Alice in a persistent tone.

The Indian shook his head negatively, and answered:

"Listen! Alca loves the American girl."

"Never mind that."

"American girl must love Alca, and Wadji will kill Alca."

"Kill you?"

"Yes. Alca can not tell you now, but when you tell Alca something, Alca will tell you all."

"What do you wish that I should tell you?"

"Tell me that you love."

Had Alice followed the natural impulse of the moment, she would have sprung back from the fervid glance of the Indian as she would have recoiled from a living cobra hissing suddenly at her feet; but by an extraordinary exhibition of self-control, she merely smiled, and answered:

"I have not known Alca long enough to discover whether I love him or not."

"Love comes like a flash of light. Love me now, or never love me. Does the American girl understand?"

"No, I do not understand."

"Listen: Alca is a prince in his own land. Wadji does not know that I have discovered the truth. Wadji stole Alca when but a child. I have learned all. Here I am poor; I have no money; in my own land I am rich. Alca shall have diamonds such as were never seen in this land. Alca will be devoted always. Alca shall be happy."

"Do people love like a flash of light in your land?"

"Yes."

"Love that comes like a flash of light, like a flash of light may vanish away," said Alice.

"Never! Alca will love Alice always. She shall be a queen, have slaves at her command, gold and jewels, and Alca's love."

"I will not tell Wadji that you speak English."

"Good! And not tell Alca you love him?"

The youth fixed his glittering orbs upon the fair girl, and a light blazed in them that caused her to shudder down in her very heart.

"You must give me time to study my own heart, Alca."

"Why do you ask time?"

"I have known Alca but a day."

"It matters not. Alca was passing from the fascination of your presence; you bid him stay. I am here!"

A cold chill went through the girl's heart. She remembered that she was alone in this house with a passion-maddened boy. But half an hour had passed, and it might yet be hours before Ola returned.

At that a shriek ran through that house of mystery—a shriek as though some one were in mortal peril; and it was the voice of a man—the voice of one who suffered anguish of some kind. The heart of the fair girl stood still; a terrible suspicion flashed across her mind. She was a prisoner, as it were, of Wadji; was it not possible that Charles Brutone was also a less favored inmate of that house of secrets?

Alca had left the door open behind him when he left the room. An impulse Alice could not restrain urged her to go toward the quarter whence the shriek came.

There was no light in the hall, and she groped along, seeking for the stairs, and wandered she knew not whither, when suddenly a hand was laid upon her shoulder, a hot breath fanned her cheek, and then came a voice in her ear, asking:

"Where you go?"
The party who asked the question gently drew her back, and said:

"Come."

Alice recognized the voice. It was Alca who spoke to her. She yielded to him, and permitted herself to be drawn back toward the apartment from which she had escaped.

Once again in the room, Alca said:

"Why did you go?"

Like an inspiration, the thought came to the girl that she must say something to cover Ola's absence.

"I went to look for Ola. I heard a woman shriek after you were gone."

"Yes; it was a woman," answered the ready-witted youth.

Like an inspiration it came to Alice that she would utilize the mad Alca's love, and learn who the man was whose voice she had heard wall out in anguish while she was groping in the hall.

"You must not be so violent," said Alice; and she actually nerved herself to smile upon him.

"You hate me!" he cried.

"No, no! And now listen, Alca: why not earn my love?"

"How can I earn your love?"

"Tell me the secrets of this house; tell me who is the prisoner in this house."

The Indian youth approached Alice, and his purpose was written upon his countenance.

"Alca, come not nearer to me!"

The youth sprung upon her and seized her in his arms.

Alice became endowed with superhuman strength, and she wrested herself free from the fellow's grasp. She drew her stiletto.

"Alca, approach me not!" she cried; and her blue eyes blazed with a light as dangerous as the gleam that shone in the eyes of the Indian boy.

At the sight of the weapon, Alca turned pale.

"Be careful!" he warned. "I will protect myself. I will tell Wadji how you assailed me."

"Never!"

The youth uncoiled from under his kilt a length of thin rope.

Alice did not scream; but she perceived his advantage. Alca was not a prince, but a thug.

"I do not fear your knife," said Alca.

Too well did Alice realize that the rope-using assassin did not mind her knife. He had but to cast the line, and he was a skilled thrower, as she believed, and she would be dragged, strangling, to his feet.

The peril was imminent, the situation terrible, and yet Alice did not despair, but stood with her blazing blue eyes fixed upon the scintillating orbs of the enraged Indian.

Once again there resounded several thrilling shrieks.

Alca listened a moment, and ran from the room, locking the door behind him.

Alice was trembling like an aspen-leaf. The danger she most feared had come upon her.

The girl ran to the window, raised it, and saw that it opened upon the roof of a piazza. She passed through, and then it was that a resolute course of action was suggested to her mind.

The girl cast her hood and slippers down to the ground, and then, like an apparition, ran along the roof of the piazza and entered the house by another window that she found open.

A strange fatality led her to enter the private sanctum of Doctor Wadji, a room that was never left unlocked, an apartment which every member of the household had been forbidden to enter under pain of death.

All Alice desired, at the moment, was to gain time until Ola should return. She was determined to see the Indian woman and warn her of the peril that impended.

Meantime, as our readers will remember, the Indian had rushed from the room immediately upon hearing the cries.

Where he went and what he did is not to be revealed at present to our readers. It is sufficient to record that he was gone but a few minutes, when he returned to the room where he had left Alice, and in his hand he still carried the knotted thug-line.

Upon opening the door he at once discovered the girl's absence, and an ejaculation escaped his lips.

Meantime, Alice stood cowering in the room where she had sought refuge; every moment she expected to see the Indian lad spring in upon her, when she would be at his mercy.

The girl sat thinking until nature stepped in, despite all the excitement of the night, and closed her eyes in sleep.

Alice slept on, all unconscious of danger, until she was awakened by a sound at the door of the room. The girl rose to her feet, clasped the knife firmly in her hand, and stood prepared to end the horror of the moment by rushing madly into the arms of death. Our readers will remember that Ola had gone to interview Sara Bindal.

It was early in the evening when she reached the vicinity of the house where the Bindals resided, and was passing under the glare of light bursting forth from a grand *café*, when her eyes fell upon the figure of a woman.

The woman, like herself, wore a heavy veil, and was evidently seeking to avoid observation.

Soon Ola decided upon a certain line of action, and moving rapidly forward, she laid her hand on the shoulder of the woman she had followed along several squares.

Ola said:

"Please come with me."

"Why should I go with you?"

"I would ask you of a friend."

"Who are you?"

"Come with me, and I will tell you."

"I can not go with you; certainly you have made a mistake. Who are you?"

"Come, and I will tell you, Miss Sara Bindal."

Veiled woman Number Two made no immediate reply.

"Come, Miss Bindal."

"Tell me who you are."

"You will know; come with me. Come at once; we are attracting attention."

"Where would you go?"

"We will go to the park, where we can talk without being overheard."

CHAPTER XV.

"I WILL go with you to the park. But remember, I have help within call; a servant is keeping me in sight, an armed servant, or I would not go with you."

The two women had directed their walk toward the park, and soon entered the well-kept walks and took up a position on a seat in a retired corner.

"Now, what have you to say?" demanded Sara Bindal; and as the woman spoke she kept her hand on the stock of a pistol which she held concealed under her shawl.

"Where is Charles Alexander Brutone?" came the abrupt question.

Sara Bindal gave a start, but in an instant she answered:

"Charles Brutone is dead."

"Did you gaze upon his dead body?"

"Yes, I gazed upon his dead body."

"Did he die a natural death, or was he murdered?"

"He died a natural death."

"Where is his cousin, Alice Fairfax?"

"I will answer your question simply to gain some information from you. Alice is dead."

"Did you gaze on her dead face?"

"I did."

"Miss Bindal, Charles Brutone is not dead."

"How do you know he is not dead?"

"I heard it from Wadji's own lips."

"Whom did he tell that Charles Brutone was not dead?"

"He told Charles Brutone's beautiful cousin Alice!"

Sara Bindal uttered an exclamation of surprise.

Ola sat silent, waiting for Miss Bindal to resume her questioning.

At length Sara asked:

"Do you remember that I told you Alice Fairfax was dead? I gazed upon her dead face. There is no question as to the fact in her case."

Sara Bindal unconsciously laid particular stress upon the words "in her case."

"Why do you speak so positively as to the death of Alice only?"

"I did not gaze upon the body of Charles Brutone."

"You told me that you did."

"I gazed upon the casket that was supposed to contain his body; but they told me the face in death was too horrible for me to look at."

"Answer me one question. Miss Bindal, in your own heart, do you really believe Charles Brutone is dead?"

"I do. If he is not dead, where is he?"

"There is indeed some mystery here, Miss Bindal. It has been claimed that he died a natural death in your house. If such were the fact, you know positively as to his death."

"I will admit that I do not understand the meaning of all you are saying. From your statements, neither Charles nor Alice is dead."

"I did not say Charles was not dead. I only said I heard from Wadji's own lips that he was living."

"I know he is dead," said Sara Bindal.

"Very well, madame, I have nothing more to ask—no more to impart."

Sara Bindal was fully convinced in her own mind that the woman was acting under instructions, and yet she did not wish to have the woman go away. There came a suggestion that she might defeat Wadji through his own trickery.

Ola made a movement as though to go away, when Sara Bindal said:

"Stay. Do no go."

"Why should I remain? Miss Bindal, we can not talk further: you do not believe my statements."

Sara Bindal was a cunning woman, and having decided upon her course, she "got down to business," as the detectives say.

"I will ask you frankly: is not yours an extraordinary tale?"

"It is, under all the circumstances."

"Could you expect me to believe it without proofs?"

"I think you should know enough of Wadji to suspect that my tale was probable."

"You tell me that Alice Fairfax is living?"

"Yes."

"Where is she now?"

"Under the care of Wadji."

"And you tell me Wadji told her that Charles was not dead?"

"He told her that Charles was not dead."

"What else did he tell her?"

"He told her that it was Charles who had arranged to have her murdered."

"What was his purpose?"

"He desired to teach her to hate Charles Brutone. He desired to tear one image from her heart that he might the more easily place his own there."

"What did Alice say when Wadji told her that her cousin still lived?"

"She said nothing; Wadji froze her to silence with the terrible tale he told."

"What terrible tale did he tell?"

"He told Alice that you were the wife of Charles Brutone; and he made it appear that you were the instigator of her attempted murder. He told her you had fascinated Charles, and that he was completely under your control and influence. But one more question, Miss Bindal: Did Charles Brutone ever conspire against the peace, happiness, or life of his beautiful cousin Alice Fairfax?"

"I know nothing, I tell you, about him. All that I know is that he died and was buried, and whatever his sins, they are buried with him in the grave."

"Enough! I have learned from you all that I desire, and I will bid you good-night."

Ola had fulfilled her mission. She had learned all that she desired, and like a dark shadow fading away she disappeared, and left Sara Bindal to gnash her teeth in rage.

Sara Bindal stood for some moments after the disappearance of Ola, undetermined what to do. She had listened to some strange revelations that night, and one fact was fully impressed upon her mind—Alice Fairfax lived.

The woman did not believe that Charles lived. She could readily perceive that Wadji would have a purpose in making it appear that he did; but the fact that Alice lived was sufficient, and it was the more terrible to contemplate that the fair girl was in the power of Wadji.

Sara Bindal had left her home that night bent upon the carrying out of a desperate purpose.

She had an appointment with Wadji. She had agreed to pay over the money that had been promised, but she did not have the amount, nor did she mean to pay it over. Her game was a deeper one.

As she turned to walk away from the spot where she had held the strange interview, she muttered:

"It is my only hope. Wadji must die; yes, he must die to-night at all hazards. To kill him will be less perilous than to risk the harm that might come from him. And Alice?—well, well! I may find her concealed in that man's house; and if I do—well, well! we shall see!"

The woman passed from the park, and once more appeared as one of the throng passing along Chestnut Street, and turned toward the river.

When Sara Bindal reached Wadji's death-den—for it was nothing but a place for disposing of people who in any way stood in his path—she knocked and was admitted by the doctor.

She lost no time, but immediately proceeded to business. As stated, her mission was to give to the doctor the twenty thousand dollars promised him by her brother and herself; but before doing so she determined to find out if there was any truth in the statements made by Ola.

She asked him if he had told Alice that she was Charles Brutone's wife, and that she influenced him to be false to her. It is needless to say that the doctor denied having done so. In fact, he told Sara that she must be mad, crazy, to suppose anything of the kind, saying:

"How could I tell Alice anything when you know that she and Charles are resting in their graves? You know very well that the body of Charles never was in the coffin that was carried from your house."

Sleuth, who had been an interested listener to all that had transpired, thought he had "hooked on" to an important point; and the old adage was once more sustained and confirmed, that "when rogues fall out, honest men get their dues."

The detective was being "let in" to some very startling revelations, and he began to hope that he would get upon the trail of the living Charles as well as the living Alice.

"I am listening to any proposition you have to make, Miss Bindal."

"Surrender both Charles and Alice, and you shall have one half the fortune, and the amount is over a million!"

"I can rely upon the fulfillment of the conditions of your compact?"

"You can."

"How will you have them, Miss Bindal, dead or alive?"

Anger shone in the eyes of Sara Bindal.

"You trifle with me, doctor."

"We may as well understand each other. The time for compacts between us is past. You and your brother have proved yourselves unfaithful to every promise you have made me. I would not take the word of either for the value of a single smelt, and although you claim to be a lady, I feel called upon to inform you that our interview is at an end. Had you paid over the twenty thousand dollars, according to agreement, I might have talked differently. As it is, you work your game and I will work mine."

Sara Bindal was not disheartened altogether; and ere our narrative of the interview concludes, our readers will learn whence came her courage.

"Your game will not succeed, doctor."

"Virtue always triumphs over vice," declared the doctor; adding, after a moment: "I stand well in this transaction. You would have murdered the young people. I saved their lives; although, in order to do so, I was compelled to make it appear that both were dead. Now, you wish to get them into your power that you may make sure of their deaths, while I keep them in hiding until the time comes to present them to claim their own; it is but a short time to wait, when both can claim their share of the estate. Alice will soon reach the stipulated age named in the will, and when that time comes, you will have an opportunity to welcome her to her regal home."

"A nice picture you draw, doctor, but your incidents can be termed false colorings. Yours is not such a generous and disinter-

ested rôle—no, no. You hope to make a certain girl your wife. The girl will come forward to claim the estates; Charles, never—and under the will the young lady is compelled to marry Charles; and even were Charles living, he would never marry the girl whom you have made up to aid you in your deeply planned scheme."

"Ah, I see your drift. You think the real Alice is dead, and that I will present a counterfeit heiress?"

"Yes, that is my idea."

"You are indeed a great woman. You have a great head, but you are mistaken; it is the real Alice who will claim the estates in company with her cousin Charles."

"Doctor, listen to me; I have one more proposition to make."

"You have made many."

"I will open up the whole secret of all my strange behavior. Wadji, you and I will take all the wealth."

The doctor started back and fixed his glittering eyes upon the woman in a peculiar manner, as he queried:

"Did you say we would take all the fortune?"

"Yes."

"I do not understand."

"Wadji, I love you."

The doctor laughed—laughed immoderately, laughed insultingly—and, after a moment, said:

"Did you not admit some months ago that I was not a fool?"

"Be careful, doctor. You may reject my love, but do not dare make it the subject for derision."

"You must excuse me, Miss Bindal; you certainly do me great honor."

The woman rose from her seat and approached the doctor. The latter sat still in his chair.

"Wadji, you have rejected every proposition I have made; there is one you will not reject."

As Sara Bindal spoke she made a step forward, when Wadji drew a revolver, aimed it at her heart, and said, coolly:

"Miss, I reject your last proposition also."

Sara Bindal had unmasked. As she made the last step toward the doctor she had disclosed her purpose and a glittering dagger.

The woman stood looking the very picture of a female fiend. Baffled rage shone in her eyes, and her fine-looking face was distorted with evil passion.

"So this is your final proposition, eh, Miss Sara?"

The doctor pointed toward the knife which the woman held in her hand.

"Coward! you were prepared to insult a woman!"

"No; I was prepared to meet a murderess."

"I had no idea of harming you until you turned my unwomanly confession into a matter for derision. I came here to pay you the money."

"The money is due me, Miss Bindal. I earned it by former services."

"The money is not your due. On your own confession you admit that Charles and Alice are both living."

"I have not admitted anything of the kind; but you will pay me the money all the same."

"Not one penny!"

"You will, or never leave this room alive."

"You dare not harm me!"

"I prepared for your coming. Listen: I could kill you, and in less than two hours there would not be a trace of you left. You would be gone, bone, muscle and flesh. Yes, ha! ha! you came to murder me, but you have come to your own doom!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE woman quailed before him. She attempted to speak, but terror froze her tongue. She suddenly appeared to realize the full meaning of the doctor's weird words. She trembled in the presence of her peril.

Sara Bindal's mission was a failure, and it only remained for her to get out of that house she had been so anxious to enter.

"I will go, doctor," she said.

"No; you shall not go. You will never leave this house again. Move another step toward that door, and you are a dead woman!"

Sara Bindal did take another step toward the door, and the doctor leaped to his feet.

"Hold!" he cried; "I have given you the last warning!"

"I defy you! Help is at hand!"

The doctor glanced around. The woman spoke in a confident tone.

Sleuth thought the moment had arrived for him to step in and take a hand in the peculiar business.

There came a warning voice, saying:

"Go slow, doctor; you're covered!"

The voice appeared to come from right under the doctor's feet; in fact, so perfect was the illusion, that the man actually stepped backward.

Sara Bindal was a cunning woman. She did not know from whence the succor had come, but it was succor.

She moved toward the door.

Once more the doctor called "Hold!" when suddenly there followed a pistol-shot; the lamp in the room was shattered, and Sara Bindal and the doctor were in total darkness.

Curses issued from the doctor's lips, while a low cry of terror escaped from the terrified woman.

Sleuth had fired the shot, and, as the lamp went out, he stepped into the room. He knew just where Sara Bindal stood. He placed his hand on her arm, and said:

"Come; you are safe. You had a narrow escape. That man meant to murder you!"

"Who are you?" demanded the woman, as she fixed her eyes on the face of the detective.

"I am the man who stood over the coffin!"
Sara Bindal received an additional shock upon hearing the declaration.

"How comes it that you were present when that man made the attempt on my life?"

"I will tell you later on. But now suppose we come to an understanding on another subject."

"What subject?"

"The present whereabouts of the girl who lay in the coffin at your brother's house."

At the mention of the name, Sara Bindal felt an inclination to scream outright.

"I know nothing about the girl beyond the fact that she died and was buried."

"Miss Bindal, your scheme is up. Under any circumstances you will be compelled to surrender the fortune. Both the real heirs are living, and you can do them no further harm."

"Then I can give you no further information."

"I will talk plainly to you. Listen: you and your brother entered into a scheme to rob the two orphans of their fortune. Your scheme has proved a failure, and it is a fortunate thing for you that Wadji schemed against you and saved both your lives. Had either been killed, you and your brother would have been hung."

The woman trembled. In a low tone she demanded:

"What will you have me do?"

"I will tell you," came the answer. "You must aid me to entrap the doctor. You must become my ally."

"I do not see how I can aid you; besides, you are a stranger to me."

"As to my being a stranger, that matters not. I am not a stranger to your recent schemes. I hold you in my power—you and your brother, and the doctor also. Listen: I can tell you that, even though I were out of the race, Wadji holds all the winning cards against you. He can crush you at a moment's notice. He would have done it ere this were it not that he has a *personal* purpose to serve before striking the blow that will practically annihilate you and your brother."

"I can not see that I can serve you. I am anxious to recover possession of my young relative. My brother and I have been almost crazy about them, and had it not been for Wadji, no harm would ever have come to them. I will tell you, sir, that circumstances may make it appear that my brother and I have been guilty of some crime, but we have been the victims of Wadji."

"It is useless for me to seek to gain your aid," said Sleuth.

"We are willing to aid you as far as we can; but, when you make the demand in the manner that you do, I feel bound to decline to act with you."

"Very well, miss; good night. But go slow; do not attempt any more schemes; every move of yours and your brother will be watched."

The woman walked rapidly away.

Sleuth moved silently through the night, taking a route which brought him to the Brutone mansion.

Meantime, Sara Bindal reached her home. She was admitted by her brother George. The latter's face was pale, terror shone in his eyes, and there was a tremulousness in his voice as he said:

"I am glad you are home safe. But tell me, how did you make out with Wadji?"

"Oh, George! all is not lost yet; but we are in great peril! Oh, George! what danger I have passed through since I saw you and bid you good-night."

"Tell me all."

The brother and sister proceeded to the library, and Sara Bindal related all that had occurred, including her interview with Ola in the park. She opened her narrative with the statement:

"Alice lives. There is no doubt of that now. Wadji played us for fools, and has us in his power."

Having told her story, the woman said:

"Now, George, what shall we do?"

"Our duty is plain."

"And what is our duty to ourselves, pray?"

"We will stop right here. If Charles lives, and Alice also, we will surrender the estate, and after what has occurred, the best thing for us to do is to return to our native land."

"Well, you are a simple-minded fellow. Now listen: do you suppose that after all we have attempted we would be permitted to go?"

"Yes; if Alice and her cousin are alive, no crime has been committed."

"Well, to use an Americanism, George, you are too fresh altogether. Do you suppose that we have committed no offense? Admitting that Alice and her cousin are alive, you and I could be taken to prison for the remainder of our lives on any one of half a dozen charges that could be trumped up against us. We are foreigners here; the moment an *exposé* comes, we will be made to appear as two of the most blood-thirsty wretches who ever conceived a desperate crime. Charles or Alice could not save us, and Wadji, for his own safety, would turn against us. Some one must be punished for the crimes that have been committed. No earthly power could save us. We must save ourselves, and we can do it. Yes, George, all that is needed is a little firmness on your part, and we can retire with flying colors."

"You are a thinker, Sara. What can we do?"

"The personal estate is negotiable within twenty-four hours. It can be converted into cash, and we can slip away and let Wadji and the orphans fight over what remains."

A long time George Bindal was silent, but at length he asked:

"How can it be done?"

There was a listener to the conversation above recorded. Sleuth was at his post, and had overheard every word that had passed between Sara and George Bindal.

"First, can you tell me how much of the estate is negotiable?"

"I could realize half a million dollars."

"Are the securities in your possession?"

"They are; and, what is more, they were never accounted for as a part of the proceeds of the estate. It was an error which, up to the present time, has never been corrected."

"George Bindal, you are a fool!" exclaimed the woman, passionately, "not to have told me this fact before. It would have saved us all this trouble."

"I did tell you—before we ever entered into this dangerous game at all. Listen: I have in my possession three or four hundred thousand additional, all negotiable."

"Oh, what a fool I have been!"

"It would have been better and safer, Sara, if we had succeeded. You know we will be fugitives all our lives if we carry off this money."

"Let us once get possession of the money, and I will risk all the perils of being a fugitive. But now let us act at once."

"What shall I do?"

"Go to New York. Convert the securities into gold."

"Yes—and then?"

"Telegraph me, and I will come on to New York, and we will take the first steamer direct to France. Ah, George, this will be grand! Wadji will lose, after all, and we will be rich, and I shall yet be the—"

"Do not talk of what you will be until you are safe in Europe, Sara. It is a difficult game we have to play even now."

"How so?"

"You forget the man who stood over the coffin. I am tracked at every step I take."

"Nonsense! George, you are a coward!"

"Had my advice been taken, we would not at this moment be in our present predicament. You have had the management all along, and we are in trouble. We have met disaster. Now you must let me plan and suggest."

"And we will lose all."

"First hear my plan. We know that this man who stood over the coffin is a wonderful man. He has appeared at strange moments in the most unaccountable manner. He appears to know everything, and appears to time everything just to a second. He was on hand to save your life to-night, but he was also on hand to overhear every word that passed between you and Wadji. He may, in some mysterious manner, get wind of our present scheme."

The woman turned pale, and quick as a flash ran and opened the door leading into the hall.

There was no one there.

Sleuth tumbled to a possibility, and made himself scarce.

"There have been no listeners to-night, that is certain."

"No, I do not believe we have been under surveillance to-night, Sara, otherwise I should have taken greater precautions. That man, in my opinion, is piping Wadji, and that gives us a chance; but we do not know at what moment he may turn up, and we must move with the utmost care. Now that I know the character of the man, I know also how to play against him."

Sleuth was jubilant. He felt that he was about to catch the whole business, and he was not mistaken; and once again the wisdom of the old thief-taker was justified.

"What is your plan, George?"

"You must trail the man who stood over the coffin."

"Why trail him?"

"He is our most dangerous enemy, especially in our new scheme."

"But we need not mind him. We can skip off quietly and leave him to pipe Wadji."

"Sara, I've had more experience with detectives than you have, and a good detective is a man who covers the whole ground when on a trail. This man who is piping us is evidently a wonderful man. Don't you see that man must have been upon our track even while we were working our scheme?"

"Who could have started him?"

"Ah! there's the mystery. It is possible that Charles may have suspected something, and may have held consultations long before we dreamed of his movements. Charles, you remember, is a smart fellow—no fool by any means. You have reason to know that, Sara. Anyhow, there is a detective upon our track, a remarkable man, a fellow who knows well that we can not conceive how much he knows of us and our doings; and in this, our last move, we must move slowly and surely."

"But we have no time to lose."

"We will not lose any time; but you must pipe this detective."

"Well, when I find him?"

"You must fall into his schemes."

"What will we gain by that?"

"I will explain. His attention must be drawn off from my movements. We must know where he is while I am in New York. If you are entertaining him in Philadelphia, I can not be under his surveillance in New York."

"And what shall be my next move, George?"

"You shall pretend to him that you have a clew as to the whereabouts of Alice. You will meet him by appointment, take him by rail away from Philadelphia—take him South on a journey that will surely occupy the whole of one day. While you are off with him, I will go to New York, turn our bonds into cash, and then—"

The man stopped.

"Well, what then?"

"We can take our time. With the money we are all right, but holding the bonds is dangerous."

The sister and brother remained talking for a long time; but Sleuth had got all the information he desired, and slipped away.

The detective took a notion to run down and interview Wadji.

Meantime, he set in motion a little game intended as a play against Sara Bindal when the latter should open up her little country excursion scheme.

Meantime, while Sleuth was gradually closing in on the real facts, strange scenes were transpiring on the banks of the Schuylkill.

As our readers will remember, Alice Fairfax had fallen asleep in the room to which she had run to find refuge from the impassioned assaults of the Indian boy Alca. Our readers will also remember that she had suddenly been awakened.

The girl rose from the seat where she had been sleeping, and stood upon the floor listening.

Terror filled her heart. She feared she had been tracked, and at any moment the frenzied lad might rush in upon her.

She was in total darkness, and commenced groping around to find the mantel-shelf, hoping to find a match.

She moved carefully about, but unfortunately tripped against something, and was precipitated forward, and fell with great force to the floor, her head coming against the side wall as she fell.

The girl lay still, momentarily stunned, but after a time, recovering somewhat from the effects of her fall, she sought to rise once more to her feet, when her eye was attracted by a little spark of fire near her face.

A moment she gazed in surprise, and as she gazed her surprise increased, and a cold tremor ran to her heart as the suspicion crossed her mind that it was the glitter of the eye of some animal.

At length, however, she felt a desire to ascertain what it really was, and summoning her native courage, she reached forth her hand, and the glittering light disappeared.

"What can it be?" she muttered; and as she spoke she withdrew her hand, when there once again sparkled and shone the little sharp ray of light scintillating its ray like a living spark.

Again Alice thrust forward her hand, and her fingers pressed upon a sharp surface.

"It's a gem!" she exclaimed; and with her fingers she sought to seize it, but the thing could not be moved.

Alice determined to secure the gem at all hazards, and after working some time, she managed to drag it out.

Having secured the ring, Alice began to think about escaping from the room. While still reflecting, she heard a noise. A shrill scream followed. In the terror of the moment Alice also uttered an involuntary scream, and ran madly across the room with outstretched arms. She was brought to a halt by coming against a door, and, fortunately, she pressed her hand against the knob. Instinctively she turned it. It yielded, and the door opened.

The girl was beside herself at the moment, or she would have acted with more caution; but when people are frightened, they almost always involuntarily rush from one danger into a greater. As matters turned, it was lucky for Alice that in her frenzy she did open the door, and as she rushed out into the lighted hall, a tragedy fell under her startled gaze.

The terrible thug had been at his work; indeed, a tragedy was in progress.

Alca stood at one end of the hall, toward the stairs, his gleaming eyes blazing like two balls of fire. Upon the floor lay Ola, writhing in the agonies of death.

Alca held in his hand the end of a rope; the coil was about the neck of the Indian woman.

Alice sprung forward, and with one dash of her knife, which was sharpened to the edge of a razor, severed the cord; then, urged by some strange impelling force, she ran to the writhing form of Ola and loosened the cord about her neck; then she turned and faced Alca.

The Indian boy stood like one paralyzed, as Alice, like an unbidden apparition, rushed from the doctor's room. The fact of seeing her rush from that room was a freezer to his blood, and when she cut the thug death-line he was for the moment powerless to act.

Alice was fully aroused. She at the instant was endowed with superhuman courage; and, urged by an impulse she could not control, she advanced, knife in hand, toward Alca, her blue eyes aflame, and her beautiful form trembling with excitement.

Strange to say, the Indian boy slunk from before her.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALICE stood a moment gazing after him, and then her eyes fell upon the severed thug-line, and a full realization of the horror of the scene flashed upon her, and her courage fled as quickly as it had been aroused. She was seized with a fit of trembling, and felt ready to scream with hysteria, when a hand was laid upon her shoulder. She turned and faced Ola.

"You have saved my life!" said the Indian woman.

"Yes; he would have strangled you!"

There was a wild gleam in the woman's eyes as she said:

"You failed."

"How failed?"

"He discovered my absence."

"Do not let us stand here and talk. Come, we will fly from this horrid place at once!" cried Alice.

"No; we will not go yet."

"But Alca? He will return and kill us both!"

"You need have no fear. Now that I know he is my enemy, he can not harm me. He will fear me now more than I will fear him."

"Wadji may return at any moment."

"The worst has come to the worst. I do not fear Wadji; I will defy him. But tell me how it is you failed."

"Alca was smarter than you believed. You thought you were deceiving him, but he knew that you intended to go away."

"This is strange."

"But it is as I tell you. He knew that you intended to go away. He knew why you sent him with the food to me. You thought you were deceiving him, but he was deceiving you. Alca is not deaf and dumb."

"I know that; but he does not speak your language?"

"Alca speaks English as well as you do."

"Where were you when I returned?"

"I was in that room."

"How came you there?"

"I fled from Alca."

"Why did you flee from him?"

"He would have assailed me."

"Enough! He is doomed! Wadji will kill him!"

"But we will not tell Wadji."

"Yes; we will tell him all—tell him to save my life."

"I thought you did not fear Wadji?"

"I do fear him; but when worst comes to worst, I am prepared to defy him; but since Alca has made an attack upon you, his peril is greater than mine."

"Let us flee from this house."

"No, no; I can not leave Wadji yet. But you tell me you were in that room?"

"Yes."

"How came you to go there?"

"I ran out from my room through the window to the top of the porch to escape from Alca. I found the window of that room open; I entered it."

"It is strange that the window of that room should be open. No living soul has entered that room since Wadji selected it as his own private apartment. It is a wonder you ever came from it alive."

"It was fortunate I was able to get out."

"Yes; that fellow Alca intended to murder me. Had you been a few seconds later I was lost."

"Now, what shall we do?"

"Nothing."

"Why remain here?"

"Because you are safer here than anywhere else, my dear child."

"Did you see Sara Bindal?"

"I did."

"And what have you discovered?"

"That Wadji has lied to you."

"Charles is not false?"

"I never believed he was, Alice."

"But what have you learned?"

"Sara Bindal believes him dead."

"Then he can not be her husband."

"That is a false tale of the doctor's."

"Then this is no place for me. I have but just escaped a fate worse than death."

"You need have no fear; Wadji dare not harm you. I will always be near; but it is only a matter of a few days; and, besides, it will be two or three days probably before Wadji will come here again."

"Ola, do you think Charles is dead?"

"I do."

"I do not believe he is dead."

"On what do you ground your hope?"

"While you were gone a strange incident occurred in this house."

"Tell me of it, my child."

Alice told the story of the shrieks of agony she had heard, and when she had concluded, Ola said:

"Dare you enter that room again?"

"We will enter it together."

The Indian woman recoiled, and, with a blanched face, answered: "I would dare aught else in the world, but I dare not enter that room."

"I can not understand why you so fear to enter there."

"I can not explain to you now; but it appears you can enter that room in safety. The causes that prevent my entrance do not apply to you, and you must go there once more."

The Indian woman had become very earnest and excited in her manner.

"Why do you desire me to enter that room?"

"You are to recover for me the sacred relic, and the gem is in that room."

Alice, during the excitement of the moment, had forgotten about the gem she had accidentally discovered.

It was upon her lips to say: "I think I have found the gem." But she checked herself; the girl had learned much within a few days, and a certain idea flashed through her mind.

Alice determined to keep the secret of her discovery as a talisman for her own safety later on, should she need the more active service of Ola.

"What makes you think the relic is in that room?"

"I know it is there."

"The door of the room is open; why not enter and search for it?"

"I can not tell you now; when I have once recovered the gem I will tell you all."

"And you wish me to face a peril you dare not face yourself?"

"You are not of my faith; you can not understand; but I dare not enter that room. It is not that I fear harm to my body, but another danger threatens me."

Alice did not know whether the woman was telling the truth or not; whether it was a weird superstition that prevented her from entering the room, or a mere physical terror.

"Where shall I search for the gem?"

"Everywhere."

"But anything as valuable as the sacred relic would not be left about easy of access."

"You can search—listen: you may find a jewel-box; if so, bring it to me."
 "But Wadji may come here at any moment."
 "He will not be here for two or three days."
 "Alca may go to him."
 "Alca will never go to him! Alca is doomed; his attack upon you has sealed his fate."
 "Alca holds a secret."
 "Go find the gem and I will worm Alca's secret from him."
 "What will you do if I find the gem?"
 "I will be your friend."
 "Will you take me from this house?"
 "When it is safe I will. Your friends, the Bindals, are searching for you, and you will be murdered."
 "When will it be safe for me to leave this place?"
 "When we find your cousin Charles."
 "Do you really mean that you will assist me to find my cousin Charles?"
 "Yes."
 "Find him and I will find the gem."
 The Indian woman's face became suddenly transformed.
 "What do you mean—tell me, have you found the gem?"
 "I am not sure."
 Ola became terribly agitated.
 "Speak! speak!" the woman demanded in a choking voice; and she seized the girl's arm.
 "I will when we have found Charles."
 "You shall speak now."

There was a menace in the woman's voice and manner; indeed, a maniacal glare shone in her eyes, and Alice was glad she had not revealed her secret; an impression arose that the woman might even kill her when the gem was surrendered.

"I saw a box in that room," said Alice.
 "Go get the box."
 "Bring me a light, and I will enter the room."
 Ola proceeded and procured a light, and returning, handed it to Alice, and fairly pushed the girl toward the room.
 Alice entered the room and closed the door behind her.

The girl had desired to enter the room in order to secure an opportunity to think over the situation. A desire had come to her to escape from that house—escape even though she were compelled to escape alone.

Meantime, as related, she entered the room, closed the door behind her, and raised her lamp aloft, when a scene of horror fell under her gaze that caused her hair to stand on end.

Grinning skeletons were ranged along the walls; and how she had escaped running against them when in the darkness she could not tell. Stuffed animals, with eyes that gleamed as though reflecting the glares of life, were scattered here and there, arranged in most life-like attitudes and postures; and worst of all, snakes, which under the dancing light appeared to be crawling about her very feet, were as thick as bean-poles in a vegetable garden.

Alice nearly fainted. Her first impression was that the things were living, and their arrangement suggested that all but the grinning skeletons were ready to spring upon her, especially the snakes. She would have fled with screams from the den of horrors, but alas! her limbs refused to act under her will.

At length, however, she recovered her nerve, and the conviction flashed upon her mind that, after all, the objects were but inanimate ornaments made to the fancy of the eccentric man who called the room his own.

"What shall I do?" was the thought that came to the girl's mind.

Opposite was the window through which she had entered the mystic room. It opened upon the porch; she could easily pass out through the window and upon the porch. But what should she do then? Could she descend to the ground? Where should she go? She could not return to her former home. She was friendless; indeed, as matters stood, she had but one friend, and that was the strange woman Ola.

The girl stood for some time considering, and at length determined to open the window and look out and study her chances for stealing away.

When she attempted to uncloset the shutters, she discovered that they were held by some mysterious catch, and all her efforts to discover the arrangement were futile.

To herself the girl muttered:
 "I must return to Ola and consider some other method of escape."

Alice began to study carefully the objects in the room, and soon, upon the table, she espied the little box upon which her hand had pressed when previously in the room.

It was a plain box with a plain little brass catch. Alice felt a disposition to open it; but remembering that Ola might desire to perform the operation herself, she did not make the attempt.

As our readers will learn later on, it was fortunate for the girl that she did not.

Upon passing out from the chamber of preserved horrors, she beheld Ola awaiting her in the hall. The Indian woman's face was livid, and her eyes glowed with an unnatural gleam.

"You were gone a long time!" exclaimed Ola in an agitated voice.

"It did not seem long to me, Ola."
 "Hours to me. But what did you find in the room?"
 "This."

Alice held up the box and extended it toward Ola.
 The woman did not attempt to take the box, but seized the wrist of the young girl, and permitting her to retain the box in her hand, examined it with the utmost interest.

"Take and open it," said Alice.
 "No, no!" ejaculated the woman.

"But how will you learn what is in it?"
 "We shall see. Come with me."

Ola led Alice down the stairs to the great hall, when she passed to the grand portal doors which opened upon a broad piazza. At the foot of the steps of the piazza was a stone—a granite stepping-stone. Pointing to the stone, Ola said:

"Cast the box against the stone with all your might."
 Alice looked at the woman in amazement.
 "Suppose the jewel is in the case. The relic will be lost."
 "Do as I bid!"

The woman's face was ghastly, and she kept a safe distance away from Alice. A suspicion entered the latter's mind, and instinctively she cast the box down upon the stone.

The result that followed was terrifying. There came a tremendous report; the box was shattered into a million pieces. Alice stood horrified, but, fortunately, uninjured.

When the smoke cleared away, in a solemn tone Ola asked:

"Where is the box?"
 Alice found voice to retort:
 "Where is the jewel?"
 Both were startled at the moment by a sudden appearance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALCA, like a red spirit, appeared before the two women. The fellow was calm and quiet, and did not look like the red-handed assassin who but a short time previously had been detected in an attempted murder.

The deaf and dumb mask had been dropped when the fellow confessed his passion for Alice, and Ola, upon beholding him, said:

"Ah! what seek you here, assassin?"

The fellow had the cheek, as the phrase goes, to attempt the old dodge. He began to gesticulate and make signs with his fingers.

"Alca, you serpent, do not attempt to deceive me! you can talk as well as I can."

Ola spoke to him in their native tongue.

The Indian appeared to recognize that his long-played game was up, and he said:

"The American girl has spoken."

"Yes; she has told me all, and Wadji will hold you to the penalty of the Oradji."

A pallor overspread Alca's dark face.

"You will betray me?"

"Did you not attempt my life?"

"I but obeyed the command."

"What was the command?"

"To silence you if you ever left the villa."

"But that is no excuse for your assault upon the American girl. You will pay the penalty of the Oradji."

"You also have incurred the doom."

"Aha! how know you?"

"I know well; Alca is no fool! Come, we will both be silent."

"Ah! you would save your life?"

"Save both our lives and the curse of the Oradji."

Ola was a little tremulous.

"Alca has a secret?"

"No."

"Shrieks were heard in the villa."

"The occasion of the shrieks is no mystery to Ola."

"Ah! came they from that quarter?"

"Yes."

"Then I will be silent."

The Indian boy glided away with a tread as noiseless as when he appeared before the two women.

Alice had stood chilled with terror, expecting every moment to see the young thug spring upon Ola with a glittering knife.

"It is well," said Ola.

"Were you prepared?"

"For what?"

"If he attempted your life."

"I am safe. I could go to sleep under his very eye in perfect safety. Having once failed in killing me, he will never make the second attempt; and besides, a thug never strikes when one is prepared. He always steals up behind and throws his death-cord when his victim is unprepared."

"But he threatened me with his eyes glaring in mine."

"He would not have struck then; he did mean but to scare you; but he has explained to me the mystery of the shrieks you heard."

"Whence came the shrieks?" demanded Alice in an eager tone.

"It is not for me to explain; but your suspicions are unfounded; we will have to look for your cousin somewhere else. He is not a prisoner in this house."

"Shall we not escape, then? There is nothing to keep us here."

"Alice, you forget there is every reason why I should remain here. I must find the relic."

"And if you find it, will you fly with me?"

"Where should I go?"

"You can find a home with me."

"You have no home. Were you to fall into the hands of your pretended friends you would not live an hour; you are safer with Wadji. Sara Bindal offered large sums to me to betray your whereabouts."

"We can seek some place of concealment in the city until such time as I can find a friend."

"I tell you that you need have no fear; you are safer with Wadji than with any one else, at present. He dare not harm a hair of your head, and he holds the secret of the existence of your cousin."

"Are you to aid me to discover the fate of my cousin?"

"Yes."

"Why not search this house?"

"You and I will do so after Wadji's next visit."

"You will not again leave me alone in the house with Alca?"

"Never! But come; you need rest, and so do I. We will decide upon many important matters to-morrow."

It was near the dawn of day when the two women retired to their rooms.

When once alone, Alice sat down and again thought over the situation. The girl felt a strong impulse to escape from that house of mystery. She could not trust even Ola. She had become satisfied that the Indian woman was but utilizing her presence for some ulterior design.

When Sleuth left the house, after having listened to the conversation between Sara Bindal and her brother, he walked down toward the house of Doctor Wadji.

The detective was absolutely assured that the doctor held Alice Fairfax a prisoner in his possession—a living prisoner—and the detective was determined to find out her whereabouts.

Our stanch old hero returned to Wadji's shop, and lay on for a long pipe, when a little circumstance caused him to change his purpose.

While holding the place under surveillance, he saw a man approach the shop, and later on the man was admitted.

"Halloo!" muttered Sleuth; "what new game is working now?"

A moment the officer considered, and then determined to attempt a second entrance into the store.

The entrance was easily effected, and a second time the detective took up a position at the door of the rear room. He had been there but an instant, however, when he suddenly darted away and hid himself under the counter.

Wadji walked out to the door of the store. Sleuth had been keen enough to lock the door after him. Wadji tried the lock, and appeared to be satisfied, and after a moment he returned into the room without having even glanced under the counter. He closed the door of the rear room, and quick as a flash the detective was at his post once more.

Upon glancing into the room, he recognized the captain of the vessel with whom Wadji had held a former interview.

"Well, Wadji," said the captain, "when are you going to be ready for me?"

"I can not tell," was the answer.

"I must sail within five days."

"Within five days I will be able to state my plans."

"Things haven't gone just right for you?"

"I have met with certain delays—unexpected delays."

"Can I be of any assistance to you?"

"Not at present."

"Can you loan me five hundred dollars?"

"Not now."

The captain appeared to be annoyed, and, rising to take his departure, he said:

"You must make up your mind very soon as to whether you will need me or not. One thing you understand—money must be paid down."

"If I engage you, the money shall be paid down; and you will be ready to sail at an hour's notice. To-morrow night all shall be decided."

"Where?"

The doctor named a meeting-place, and the captain said:

"I shall be on hand."

Sleuth slipped to his cover, and the captain passed out from the doctor's presence.

A few moments passed, when our hero once more took up his position. He saw the doctor sitting alone, evidently lost in deep thought. Wadji was mumbling and muttering to himself, but as he muttered in his native language, Sleuth was unable to detect the subject of his mutterings.

At length our hero determined to interview Wadji, and he worked a "transform," and then boldly walked into the room.

"Good-evening, doctor," said the detective.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?"

"I have come to have a little talk with you."

"How dare you enter my house at such an hour without even announcing your presence?"

"Beg pardon, doctor, but I came here expressly to talk with you."

"What is your business with me?"

"I have come to inquire about one of your patients."

"You must come at a more seasonable hour. And now, if you do not depart I will step to the door and summon the police."

"Ah, no, you will not call the police."

"You are an impudent fellow. It's my idea you are a thief; but you have entered the wrong place."

"Your name is Wadji?"

"That is my name."

"Then I am in the right house."

Wadji was perplexed. He did not understand how the man dared enter his house; but when he remembered the scene that had transpired a short time previous to the visit to the captain, he began to suspect that a friend of Sara Bindal confronted him.

"You say you have business with me?"

"I told you I had come to inquire about one of your patients."

"Which patient?"

"Miss Alice Fairfax."

The doctor laughed.

"Probably you are not aware that Miss Fairfax has been dead several weeks."

"I am not aware that she is dead. Come, come, doctor; that's all right for the marines, but you and I know better."

"I do not know what knowledge you possess, but it appears so complete you had better act on your own information entirely."

"Pretty good for you, doctor. And now how about your other patient, young Charles Alexander Brutone?"

The doctor again laughed upon hearing the inquiry.

"Are you some lunatic let loose?"

"No; I am not a lunatic. Doctor, I am about to convince you that I know what I am talking about."

"You may convince me that you are a rogue."

"I am going to convince you that you are a defeated villain, prove that you expect to whack up the estate with George Bindal."

The doctor tried to appear calm and indifferent; but despite his efforts a pallor shone on his dark face.

"I have no business with George Bindal."

"Didn't you expect to be paid twenty thousand dollars to-night?"

"I did expect to be paid a sum of money to-night, the amount of my bill for professional services."

"Ah! you charge large sums for administering poisons ostensibly, but really sleeping potions."

The doctor began to perceive the identity of the man with whom he was talking. Wadji had expected a visit from the mysterious detective, and he had prepared to receive his guest.

"My friend, you had better go off about your business and not drive me to extremes."

"You may get as extreme as you please, doctor. Now listen: your game is up; you can not make any terms with Bindal, but you can make terms with me."

"Who are you?"

"I am the man, who stood over the coffin. I am the man whom you attempted to smother in this hell-hole of yours here, and now you have an idea of making Alice Fairfax your bride."

The doctor's face became ghastly.

"You expect in that manner to secure the Brutone estates; but you never will, simply because I've got you down too fine. I've been on your track clean through. I've got every point on you. In plain language, you're my mutton!"

The doctor trembled with anger. He was in too desperate a strait to experience fear.

"A thousand curses on you!"

"Curse away, doctor. I've been listening to that sort of music all my life, and from just such scoundrels as I know you to be."

"You think, I suppose, that you have me in a tight place?"

"Yes, that's my idea. You will never take Alice Fairfax away from Philadelphia, so you need not detain the captain to await your movements; let him sail."

"You propose to make terms with me?"

"Yes."

"What terms do you desire to make?"

"You shall at once surrender the cousins into my hands."

"Your terms are surely very simple."

"Yes, very. And now, let me tell you I've all the points down fine on your friends, the Bindals. They are powerless to raise one dollar on the estates. They could not pay you the twenty thousand even if they desired to do so. The fact is, Sara Bindal came to your house here this night in order to settle with you on entirely different terms."

"She came to murder me."

"Yes; and you attempted to murder her; but unfortunately you were interrupted. I say unfortunately, for in my heart I think it would have been a good thing for the community if you had succeeded; but it would have been murder all the same. And now, doctor, if you are tired of my presence here, just call in the police. We will find a prisoner for them."

The doctor sat pale and silent.

"If I surrender Alice Fairfax, how much money will you pay me?"

"If Charles Brutone is alive, and the girl is restored safely, you shall receive ten thousand dollars and be guaranteed against all prosecution; but remember, I must owe her restoration to your voluntary assistance."

"I accept the conditions."

"Good-night," said Sleuth.

The real closing move of the game had opened.

Sleuth was compelled to give the doctor rope. He had hoped to win the fellow over to a full surrender, but when he saw how determined he was, the detective gave it up as a bad job, and set to accomplish through stratagem what he had failed in securing through diplomacy.

Sleuth started to go toward his lodgings, and was on Chestnut Street when he met a veiled lady.

"Ah!" muttered the detective, "Sara is out for business."

The woman stepped in front of our hero, and said:

"Can I have a few moments' conversation with you?"

"Do you wish to speak to me, madame?"

"Yes; I do wish to speak to you."

"Well, what have you to say, madame?"

"Do you remember what you said to me last night?"

"You are Miss Bindal?"

"I am Miss Bindal."

"I recollect what I said to you last night."

"You told me you wished me to join with you against Wadji."

"Yes."

"I am prepared to do so."

"Indeed. Last night you were set the other way."

"I have changed my mind."

"What has led you to change your mind?"

"I do not know as that makes any difference; it is enough for you that I am willing to serve you."

"In what manner?"

"I know that you are anxious to find Alice Fairfax. I can lead you to the place where she is held a prisoner."

Sleuth, as our readers know, had the points down on Miss Sara's game, and he said:

"It is strange, Miss Bindal, under all the circumstances, that you should so suddenly be willing to surrender the girl to me."

"Wadji has turned against me. I do not serve you for love of yourself, but because I hate Wadji."

"I will go with you, miss."

"When?"

"Within an hour."

Sara Bindal walked away, and taking a cab, hastened to her home.

As usual, she was met by her brother George.

"It's all right!" she exclaimed.

"And he is to go with you?"

"Yes. Within an hour."

The brother appeared greatly pleased, and said:

"Sara, if this goes through all right, we are fortunate people. You will have to come on to New York. But you are sure the man is going with you?"

"He jumped at the idea of going."

The brother and sister arranged their plans, and Sara bid him good-bye and proceeded to meet Sleuth.

Sleuth, meantime, was also engaged putting up a job, as it were, and it would be a cold day when a woman could fool the veteran detective.

After leaving Sara Bindal, the detective made certain preparations. He was determined to secure the personal estate. All along it had been his fear that Sara and her brother would get away with the money, and the latter fact was an obstacle in the way of closing in his game.

At the appointed time, to a second, Sara Bindal was at the rendezvous. Sleuth, however, did not put in an immediate appearance.

The woman paced rapidly to and fro, each moment becoming more and more excited.

"He will not come!" she said. "He will not come!"

As she paced, a man passed by her, and, despite her veil, evidently recognized her, for he turned about and approached the veiled woman.

"Ah, Miss Bindal, you here?"

"Doctor Wadji! I have no time to waste words with you."

"I am the only man with whom you should waste words, as you term it, at this moment."

"You had better go your way."

"Who was the man who assailed me last night when you were in my office?"

"A friend."

"I should say he was not your friend; for the man, as he spoke to me, would appear to be your most bitter enemy. And now let me tell you something, Miss Sara. Your cunning has ruined our whole scheme. Your dishonesty toward me has spoiled the pudding for us all. Now, I will give you good advice; you have discharged all your guns, but I have a whole battery in reserve."

Sara Bindal turned slightly pale under her veil. She had enjoyed the interview, but the doctor's last remark was unpalatable. Were it not that she had her last scheme, as she supposed, in successful progress, she would have been very uncomfortable.

At that instant Sara glanced across the street and saw Old Sleuth.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE detective motioned secretly to the woman that it was all right, and she felt easier.

Sara Bindal walked away, but was soon aware that the doctor was following her.

Further down the street she met Sleuth, who was advancing toward her. As he passed, he said:

"You are being followed. But never mind, go straight to the depot; you will see me on the train; I will follow you."

Sara Bindal took the hint, and proceeded to the depot.

She was compelled to wait an hour before the train she had determined to take would start, and while she waited she saw the detective moving around the waiting-room.

After the train had left the depot, the detective started to walk through the car, and as he passed where Sara Bindal sat, he said in a low tone:

"Your shadow is on the train."

"Where?"

"In the adjoining car. But never mind; I will just follow you and will not speak to you again."

The woman nodded her assent, and the detective walked on.

The train covered fifty miles, and Sara Bindal made no effort to leave it.

Again the detective approached her, and asked:

"How far do we go?"

"We leave the train about thirty miles from here."

"All right," was the answer.

Meantime, Sara began to revolve in her mind a plan for leaving the train sooner. She had fully determined to shake Sleuth.

The woman watched her chance, and entered the ladies' room, and there remained until the train stopped, and just as it was leaving she passed out to the platform and leaped off while the car was in motion.

The train thundered on, and Miss Bindal laughed outright.

"Well, I am a lucky woman!" she muttered, under her veil, as she walked back toward the ticket-office to inquire when the next train would come along going toward Philadelphia.

She learned there was a train due in about three quarters of an hour.

In due time the inbound train reached the station, and Miss Sara Bindal, with a bounding heart, stepped aboard. But she had not

traveled many miles before her heart throbbed even more heavily from another cause.

She had traversed half the distance back to the city, when she chanced to turn round, and there, sitting in the seat right behind her, was Sleuth!

"You change your mind rather suddenly," coolly remarked the detective.

The woman found voice to say:

"I did not mean to evade you. I left the train for a moment, and was left behind, so I thought I would return to the city."

"We can go to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"You will go alone, Miss Bindal."

The woman soon recovered her nerve. She thought the whole matter over, and came to the conclusion that, after all, her purpose had been accomplished. She had carried the detective out of the city, and had given her brother ample time to leisurely carry out his plans.

George Bindal had arranged with his sister certain details.

Victor had been detailed to follow Miss Bindal, to keep her in sight, and at the last moment the woman was to tip a signal that all was right.

Victor returned to the house, and was met by his master.

"Well, Victor, what do you report?" came the inquiry.

"It's all right, sir. I saw her on the train, and from the window she passed me the arranged signal."

A pleased smile irradiated the face of the man, and he muttered:

"Victor," he said, after a moment, "I am going to New York."

"Do I go with you, sir?"

"No: you must remain here to attend to Miss Sara."

"Will she join you in New York?"

"I do not know whether it will be necessary for my sister to join me or not, but you must remain to watch over her, and be ready to bring her on to New York in case her presence is required."

The negro was silent and thoughtful a moment, but at length he said:

"But she has gone in advance."

"She will be back here in a few hours. I am merely going to New York on business; and, my good man, to relieve your mind, I will make a confidant of you. There is an impudent fellow, a black-mailing scoundrel, who is watching all my movements. I have some important business to transact in New York, and I do not wish to have the man to whom I allude following at my heels to spy into my business. My sister has taken the man off on a false lead while I go to New York."

"Ah, that is the game, sir?"

"That is the game, Victor, if game you call it."

"And what am I to do, sir?"

"At five o'clock you will go to the telegraph office, where there will be a dispatch from me addressed according to this card."

Bindal handed Victor a card with a false address written thereon.

"You can depend upon me, sir," said Victor.

George Bindal retired to his room and remained alone for fully half an hour. At the end of the time named he came forth equipped for traveling, carrying in his hand a small portmanteau.

George Bindal had assumed a disguise while in his room, and as he came forth, he said to Victor:

"I am going on very important business, and it is necessary that I should take every precaution."

"No one would recognize you, sir, as you appear now."

"Victor, you attend to all as directed, and you will have no cause to complain of my treatment of you; as you have been a good servant you will find me a liberal master."

Victor bowed his head, and George Bindal passed to the street.

Immediately the expression on the darky's face changed, and he muttered:

"Some game is going on. I would not trust either one of them, and I shall go and interview Wadji. I shouldn't wonder," he mused, "if the whole gang had cleared out, Wadji and all."

Meantime, Sleuth and Sara Bindal had talked but little beyond the conversation related. Upon nearing the depot, the detective said:

"Well, miss, we are almost home."

"Yes, sir, and I am sorry our trip is so barren of satisfactory results."

"Oh, it's all right; I've enjoyed it, miss."

The woman was perplexed. She could not understand the detective's extraordinary equanimity. He did not appear to be at all disturbed or out of temper.

"You are certainly a very patient man."

"What makes you think so, Miss Bindal?"

"You do not appear to be at all out of temper."

"Well, I hope your brother has enjoyed an equally pleasant trip to New York."

Sara Bindal actually rose from her seat in the excitement of the moment, but the detective sat calm and cool, with a quiet smile upon his face.

Sara leaned over and asked:

"Who told you my brother intended to go to New York?"

"No one told me."

"What made you suspect he was going to New York?"

"Well, I understand he wishes to raise some money; but I reckon he will fail."

The woman could have screamed with anger and disappointment.

The train dashed into the depot.

The woman rose from her seat and hastened from the car. As she stepped from the train, she was met by Victor.

The mulatto was delighted to see his mistress. He had been laboring under the impression that he would never see her again.

"Come, Victor," she commanded.

Victor followed her from the station.

"Did my brother go to New York?"

"Yes, miss."

At that moment Sara Bindal saw the detective standing upon the opposite side of the street.

"That man is following me," she murmured, and a fierce gleam shone in her eyes. Turning to Victor, she said:

"Victor, do you see that old man over there wearing spectacles?"

"Yes, miss."

"If you will follow that man and beat him into a jelly, I will give you one thousand dollars."

"How can we manage it, miss?"

"You leave me here. I will walk to some lonely place. You will follow me—shadow us, and when a good opportunity offers, you do as I demand."

"All right; start on your trip. I will be at your heels, and I will earn the money."

The woman walked away several squares, and took a car going toward Fairmount Park.

Reaching the vicinity of the park, the woman alighted and walked away through an unfrequented and unsettled neighborhood, and was soon made aware of the fact that she was being followed.

"I wonder what his object is in following me?" she muttered, and she determined to await his approach and speak to him.

The detective, seeing the woman stop, advanced, and as he drew near, Sara said:

"You are following me?"

"Yes."

"What is your object? You have no right to shadow my footsteps."

"Oh, yes, I have; you promised me a favor."

"I would like to know what all this means."

"It means that the time has arrived for you to make an open and full confession; you are to tell me just where I can find Alice Fairfax."

Sara Bindal glanced around furtively, and at length espied Victor. The mulatto was prepared to do his work.

CHAPTER XX.

THE darky drew a club and sprung toward the detective, exclaiming:

"Halloo! Who are you?"

The detective drew a pistol, and covering the fellow, said:

"You see who I am. I am just in here, and what's here will be in you in just about three new-time minutes if you don't make yourself scarce. You get!"

Victor did get. He was armed, but he did not dare draw a weapon against a man as cool as the detective.

A moment later and Sara Bindal and the detective were once more alone.

"I thought you were a smarter woman than to attempt to get up any such job on me, Miss Bindal. I am too old a hand to be caught."

The detective then fell out of sight.

Meantime, George Bindal was attending to the business he had in hand, after a fashion.

As our readers will remember, the man changed his appearance, packed a portmanteau, delivered his final instructions to Victor, and left the house. He proceeded direct to the depot, and arrived just in time to board a train bound for New York.

The train had just started, when a very neat, business-like looking gentleman took the unoccupied seat beside George Bindal.

As the stranger seated himself, he said:

"A pleasant day."

"Yes, sir, very pleasant."

As a usual thing, George Bindal was a very quiet and reticent man, but singularly enough at the time of his secret trip to New York he showed a disposition to talk.

When the train reached Newark, the stranger asked:

"Where do you stop?"

"I think of returning to-night."

"Ah, you will not remain over?"

"No, sir; I have a little banking business to do, and when my business is over I shall take a late train back to Philadelphia."

The stranger looked at his traveling companion in a surprised manner, and said:

"You do not expect to do any banking business to-day?"

"My business is with a private banker whom I will meet after business hours."

"You have a large number of securities to dispose of, I suppose?"

George Bindal looked like a man who had suddenly been confronted with a ghastly apparition.

"Sir, you are certainly assuming a knowledge of my affairs that is unwarranted."

"I know your business in New York. I have no need to ask you any questions."

George Bindal turned paler, and looked more and more amazed.

"I do not understand you, sir."

"I told you I knew all about your business. I know who you are."

The men were speaking in a low tone.

"You know who I am, sir?"

"Yes; I know who you are. And can't you guess who I am?"

"I can not. But I recognize in you an impertinent fellow."

"Go slow, George Bindal."

George Bindal trembled.

"And now, George," continued the stranger, "you will go with me to a hotel."

"I will have nothing to do with you."

"Will you go to a hotel with me or will you go direct to jail?"

"I will go to a hotel with you."

"You have come to a wise conclusion," said Sleuth.

"I am beaten," frankly acknowledged Bindal.

While the two men were talking, the train dashed into the depot at Jersey City.

George Bindal reached for his portmanteau, but Sleuth was too quick for him. The detective took possession of the little treasure-bag.

"Hold! you can not take that!" said Bindal in a determined tone. "It is my property."

"Since when?"

"I am willing to accompany you and talk over a compromise, but I must carry my own baggage."

The passengers had almost all left the car, and the detective reached over and whispered in the man's ear:

"Make any resistance, and I will shoot you down like a dog. And I would serve you right, you white-livered assassin!"

George Bindal yielded.

"Am I a prisoner?" he demanded.

"Yes, you are a prisoner."

The two men left the car, and Sleuth said:

"I have recovered the securities. You can now go where you please. Good-afternoon."

Sleuth walked away, leaving George Bindal standing on the station platform.

The veteran crossed the river to New York, proceeded to his home, and examined the contents of the portmanteau. He had indeed made a good haul.

The detective proceeded down-town, made certain arrangements, and took the fast train back to Philadelphia.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock when the detective arrived in Philadelphia on his return trip.

Sleuth proceeded direct to the hotel where he lodged during his sojourn in the Quaker City, and a few moments later was joined by his double.

The detective's friend, whom we shall call Andy, was a shrewd young man who had been trained to the business by the detective; and Andy had his master's ways down so well, he could, when occasion required get himself up as an exact double; and, what was more, he could imitate the tones and manners of the veteran to perfection.

When the two detectives met, Andy asked:

"How did you make out?"

"I captured the swag."

"Good boy!"

Sleuth related his experience, and Andy remarked:

"You had it easy on him, old man."

"Yes; he made no fight. I did not expect he would; the thing was too dead on him."

Sleuth now resolved to visit George and Sara Bindal.

On the way to the Brutone mansion, Sleuth gave his double certain points, and at the house they separated.

Sleuth did not enter the house at once. He took a survey, and, while so engaged, tumbled to a point.

It was a dark night, and the detective had been moving cautiously around the house, when he espied the figure of a man, and in a moment the veteran discovered that the stranger, like himself, was a mouser.

"There's my double game!" muttered Sleuth, as he recognized Wadji.

Sleuth had his own method for entering the mansion, as our readers remember, and his ingress and egress hole had never been discovered. The moment the door closed on Wadji, Sleuth made a run round to his hole, and had his old position just as Wadji and Sara Bindal faced each other in the library.

"How dare you come here?" demanded Sara.

Wadji was cool and calm as usual.

"I came here to have a little talk with you."

"I will summon a witness to our interview."

"You need have no fear; we are in the same boat now. The game has all gone against us."

"Had you been faithful, we would not be in peril at this moment."

"All would have been well had you paid over the money; but that is not the real cause of our present peril."

"What is the real cause?"

"The fact that Charles Brutone and Alice Fairfax are at this moment alive."

"How do you know that what you tell me is true?"

Again Wadji spoke in a low, husky voice as he said:

"Had the man who stood over the coffin really gazed on the face of the dead, had your original plan been carried out, all would have been well."

"You admit that much?"

"I do."

"You may yet regain my confidence."

"I must. And all is not yet lost. Our peril has all come through the mysterious man who stood over the coffin."

"No; it came out of your treachery. You have practically admitted as much."

"I will admit what you say in that respect. The man would have had no grip on us if the cousins had really been dead. To me they may yet owe their deaths!"

The woman's face became illumined with a glare of hope. She drew nearer to Wadji, and in a low tone demanded:

"But what will prevent the proof of murder?"

"They will never find the bodies."

"You can not hide them from our Nemesis."

"I can destroy so that there will remain of them no more trace than there is of the man who was buried under the apple-tree, and

whose remains supplied sap to the fruit; and I can distribute their bones and sinews like dust to the four winds of heaven."

Again there followed a silence. The woman thought intensely. At length she said:

"You have some demand to make?"

"Yes."

"What is your demand?"

"Half the estate. We have not much time to spare. Listen: I make this proposition knowing that you have been in treaty with the detective."

"You are mistaken."

"You went to A—to-day in company with the detective."

"You followed me?"

"I did."

"Appearances may have been against me; but I was not in any game against you. I was playing a game to save myself, and in saving myself I would have saved you. Yes, Wadji, within an hour I attempted to silence the man who stood over the coffin. I failed there; it was a last desperate effort to kill him. Our Nemesis is a terrible man, and until you came here I had made up my mind to give up the fight."

"And now?"

"I am willing to fight it out if you offer any chance. But I tell you we have a terrible man to play against."

"The man has always succeeded against you; against me, never. He has trailed and shadowed, but he has not yet found the cousins, and he never can find them unless I surrender them, and I can surrender them if I choose. I can make better terms than you, for I have something to offer; you nothing; and yet I am not prepared to surrender. I go not to him; I come to you."

"If I could only believe you were telling me the truth!"

CHAPTER XXI.

"MISS BINDAL, I wish to make a large stake; the game is all in my own hands. I can go to the detective; he knows that the cousins live; he has already offered me a large sum for their surrender, and as I told you, I can treat with the cousins for their liberty; but with you and your brother we can secure the whole estate, all of it, every dollar, and laugh at the detective."

"Do, do; go perform your part of the plan; you can depend upon us."

"That will not do."

"What will you have more?"

"I will have a guarantee that will hold you and your brother to the performance of your agreement."

"I want time to think over your proposition. Come here to-morrow, and you can talk with my brother also. I wish my brother was here now."

At that moment the door opened, and George Bindal stepped into the room.

Sara Bindal raised her hand in a cautionary manner for her brother to remain silent.

"What does that man want here?"

"Hush, George! The doctor is our friend, after all."

"I know better; he has been acting treacherously to us all through."

As George Bindal spoke he drew a revolver.

"Hold, George! What would you do?"

"I have returned to Philadelphia for no other purpose than to pay that wretch off—pay him his due!"

"Stop, George; you will ruin all!"

"Sara, are you permitting yourself to be still deceived by that man?"

"George, I want you to hear what he has got to say."

"I would not believe a dying confession coming from his perjured lips."

"There is yet a chance to save all. The cousins are both alive."

"Thank Heaven!" came the ejaculation.

"They are in the power of Wadji. Within a few hours they can both be corpses."

"Who will destroy them?"

"Wadji."

"Let him hurt one hair of their heads, and I'll be their avenger. Indeed, sister, there is but one road to safety for us, and that is over that man's miserable corpse!"

"Hold, George! you know not what you say."

"I have weighed every word."

"You are discouraged; but all will yet go well."

"Curse the whole business, say I—yes, curse it all! and a thousand curses on the head of that wretch who first suggested the game of iniquity!"

Wadji rose to his feet, and facing Bindal, demanded:

"Do you charge that I first suggested the whole business?"

"I do."

"You lie!" said Doctor Wadji.

When the doctor made the last assertion, he left the room. When he had gone, Sara said:

"George, there is but one living show for us, and if you do not accept it we go to jail, and when released, we come forth beggars."

"And Wadji comes to us offering escape and a fortune? Let me hear his offer."

The woman told all that had passed between her and the doctor.

"I am a passive agent in all your games, sis. I will not stand in your way; it does not make much difference to me. I have my way of escape provided; and if you were a sensible woman you would make it a double tragedy."

At that moment there came a rap at the door. Wadji had returned.

The man entered the room in his usual quiet and assured manner.

"Is your brother in better temper?"

"My brother is prepared to listen to any proposition you may have to make."

"As the matter stands, the game is lost?"

"Yes."

"I can save all."

"And what is your demand?"

"Half the fortune."

"A moderate demand, doctor," said George.

"It is evident, Miss Bindal, that your brother is not friendly to our plans. But we can win now. It all remains with me. If I am made solid as to my share, I will save the whole fortune to be divided between us; but I must be assured—positively assured of my share of the 'swag.'"

"You can get no assurance from me," said George.

"Do you mean that you are prepared to surrender?"

"Yes."

"Then you will compel me to turn against you."

"Well, turn. What can you do?"

"When I make up my mind that there is no money to be made out of you, I can do a great deal for myself," answered the doctor.

"Go ahead, doctor, and work your own game. I am going to bed. Good-night, sister dear."

George Bindal had his hand on the door-knob, when his sister said:

"George, will you leave it all to me? Will you sanction and guarantee my arrangements?"

"Yes, I will sanction any arrangement you may make."

George Bindal left the room, and Sara Bindal and the doctor were alone.

"Now, doctor, tell me just what it is you want us to do."

"Place in my hands a certain number of bonds as security."

"We have no bonds."

"That will not do, miss."

"It is a fact. But I have my jewels."

"Your jewels are a mere bagatelle in value compared to my demands."

"Suppose my brother executes a paper?"

"What sort of paper?"

"Giving you his note for the amount you demand."

"That might do."

"Come here to-morrow, and in the meantime I will talk to him."

Sleuth had his cue; the detective stole from his place of concealment, silently passed up the stairs, and entered George Bindal's room. The veteran was just in time. Bindal held a cocked revolver to his temple, and an instant later the deed would have been accomplished.

Sleuth leaped across the room, seized the man's arm, and turned the aim of the pistol aside. The weapon was not exploded.

"Here, my friend, what would you do?"

"You here!"

"Yes, I am here."

"Would you had been one minute later!"

"No; it's lucky for you I came just as I did."

"Have you come to arrest me?"

"No; the fact is, George, I will not arrest you if you will turn now and aid me to undo all the mischief that has been done."

"How can I aid you, sir?"

"First let me explain: If you will honestly become my confederate, I will promise you immunity from punishment for any crime you may have committed or attempted, and I will guarantee to you a sufficient sum of money for you to leave this country comfortably."

"And my sister?"

"She shall go away with you."

"Enough; I am your friend. I am sick of this whole business. And now, what can I do?"

Sleuth had his man at last, and the old veteran saw clear water right into the harbor of success.

"Are you really willing to join me?"

"Yes. I am at your service."

"The doctor wants you to give him your notes?"

"He'll get no notes from me."

"Yes, you must give him the notes."

"I do not understand."

"I can not fully explain; but in giving him the notes you will aid me. They will be worthless, and I will guarantee to return them to you in forty-eight hours."

"Ah! I see; you wish me to pretend to fall into his scheme?"

"Yes. Go down-stairs; pretend you have thought matters over, and that you have changed your mind."

George Bindal left the room. In the hall he met his sister.

"George, you must come down-stairs."

"What is up now?"

The woman explained the doctor's proposition.

"Go and tell the doctor I will come down."

Sara Bindal returned to the library and announced that her brother would come down.

An instant later George Bindal entered the room.

"Your sister has explained all to you?" said Wadji.

"Yes."

"And you will agree to the arrangement?"

"I would willingly if I had any confidence in you."

"The notes will be of no value to me unless you come into the estate."

"And to what amount do you wish the notes made?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. For that amount you gain possession of over a million. You have nothing to lose, all to gain, simply because if you do not sign the notes, I will treat with the man who stood over the coffin."

The doctor appeared to take particular delight in alluding to the detective as the man who stood over the coffin.

"If I give you the notes, when will the job be done?"

"At once."

"But what proof shall I have that they are dead?"

"You shall gaze upon their dead faces."

"I will sign the notes," said George Bindal.

Paper and ink and all the necessities were at hand, and the notes were drawn in true legal style, and George Bindal signed.

After the notes were signed, Wadji put them in his pocket, and remarked:

"You have acted wisely; and now once more we are friends."

The doctor then took his departure.

After he had gone, Sara turned to her brother, and said:

"George, it is all right now. That man's interests are ours."

The brother smiled in a peculiar manner.

"Why do you smile?"

"I have reason to smile."

There was a certain significance in the brother's smile which caused the sister to say:

"You are holding back something from me."

"Well, the fact is, I am feeling quite happy—happier than I have felt for many months."

"Then, in your heart you really think we will win?"

"No; I am certain we will never possess this fortune; I expect something entirely different. Sara, I expect that within forty-eight hours Charles and Alice will be in possession here."

"And the prospect of their return to this house makes you happy?"

"Yes."

"When they return what is to become of us?"

"We will go to Spain."

"To jail, you mean."

"No; Wadji will go to jail."

The brother laughed in a self-satisfied manner."

"George Bindal, what do you mean?" almost shrieked Sara Bindal.

"I mean we would have been too late to accomplish anything."

The sister's voice was a volume of concentrated bitterness, as she asked:

"George Bindal, have you turned traitor?"

The brother laughed.

"George—George, I really fear you have lost your senses."

"No; I am all right."

"When did you see the detective?"

"About ten minutes ago."

"He was in this house?"

"Yes; he sent me down here to sign those notes. He was a witness when they were signed."

"And were you the traitor who introduced him here to listen to our plans?"

"No. Wadji told you he was shadowed; but the man did not dream, at the time, how closely he was trailed. Why, Sara, each step he is taking now is piped, and it is utterly impossible for him to go to the place where the cousins are concealed. You and I have been shadowed for weeks—detectives have been floating in the very air we breathe."

The sister was silent a moment, but at length she said:

"Then all hope is lost!"

"All hope of our ever obtaining this fortune is lost."

"And you are content to lose a fortune?"

"Sara, it was never possible for us to win a fortune. A Nemesis has been upon our track from the very first, and to-morrow you will be satisfied I did right. Listen: I have given no information; no information was demanded of me; the man knows more of Wadji's movements and of his intentions than you or I, and to-morrow you will learn how true is all that I am telling you, and you will be thankful that I, at the last moment, when all hope of success had fled, made a friend of the terrible man who will close in on the doctor."

Sara was a "sadly disappointed woman, but it dawned upon her mind that, after all, under all the circumstances, it was fortunate that her brother had got in ahead of Wadji.

"After all, it may be as well, George; but it is hard to come so near winning a fortune, and lose it."

At that moment the door opened, and Sleuth stepped into the room.

Sara Bindal sat and coolly faced the detective, and a cold thrill went through her heart when the wonderful Sleuth said:

"Miss, your friend Wadji is being looked after. Your brother has done wisely and well; and, miss, I have but a few words to say to you, and wish that all people intending the perpetration of crime might hear my words. The way of the transgressor is hard, and in the end sin always brings down severe punishment on the head of the criminal."

"Ah! are you a preacher?" said the woman in a satirical tone.

"When opportunity offers I sometimes preach. You are a smart, brave woman—one of the keenest women I ever met—and I tell you now it is not too late for you to turn your talents in some honorable direction, and you may thus win the fortune you could not steal."

Sara Bindal did not understand how this wonderful man appeared to know everything. Nothing appeared to be a sealed book to him.

"Am I to consider you a friend?" asked Sara Bindal.

"I might prove a friend if I were fully satisfied that you desired to turn over a new leaf."

"When I decide to turn over a new leaf I will come to you."

The woman spoke in a satirical tone, and Sleuth was forced to the conclusion that she was a woman so bad at heart there was no chance of her ever turning over the new leaf.

"Will you, sir, answer me one question?"

"I may or I may not; but I can listen to your question."

"What induced you to start out to investigate the circumstances of the supposed death of Alice?"

"That is my secret. And now, Miss Sara, I have vouchsafed you some excellent advice. You do not appear disposed to profit by my advice; and now I warn you, stop just where you are. Do not attempt any more schemes. You will hear from me, George Bindal, within forty-eight hours, and you may rely that I will keep my word in all that I have promised you."

"I place implicit reliance upon your word, sir."

"Good-night," said Sleuth; and he glided from the room.

The detective went down to Wadji's store. He saw a man standing near by, like a statue in a park.

The detective approached the man, and said:

"Well, Andy, what's up?"

"He's in his burrow, and I'm watching the hole."

"I reckon we had better make sure, Andy."

"I was only waiting for you to come."

Sleuth advanced to the store door and attempted to enter; but Wadji had put on a bolt.

The detective ran his hand over the glass plate in the door-frame, and removing a square pane of glass, introduced his hand and unlocked the door. Entering the store, he crept to the rear room, and peeping through the key-hole, fell to the game.

An old woman was in the room. Wadji had been working a transform.

The detective was delighted. It was evident the man was going to make a visit to the jewel-box. He was preparing to evade detection.

Sleuth glided from the place, relocking and bolting the door. He was joined by his pal.

"How is it?"

"All right, Andy. The old rat is making ready for his last visit."

The two men sought a cover in different directions.

Sleuth passed around the block, and when upon the adjoining street he saw the figure of an old woman moving cautiously along in advance.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHILE the incidents were in progress which have been related in our preceding chapter, a series of startling occurrences were transpiring at the villa on the Schuylkill.

As stated, Ola retired to sleep, but Alice could not sleep, and she sat thinking and thinking until daylight illumined her room.

It was well into the morning when Ola awoke and entered our heroine's room. She found Alice gently sleeping; at the last moment the fatigued girl had dropped off into a restful sleep.

Ola determined not to awaken her; the woman observed that Alice had not retired during the night.

Later on, upon Ola's return to the room, she found Alice awake.

"Good-morning, my dear," said the woman, "you have been sleeping?"

"Yes; I must have fallen asleep. And now, Ola, what are we to do?"

"Nothing but wait for matters to develop."

"What matters are to develop?"

"I can not tell until Wadji returns."

"Why do you not enter his room under the daylight, and search for your relic?"

"I dare not, but I am going to ask you to do so."

"I dare not, after the experience of last night."

A change appeared to come over Ola. Alice was quick to notice it.

A moment Alice hesitated; she hardly dared speak what was on her mind; but at length she said in a trembling voice:

"I have reason to believe that my cousin Charles is a prisoner in this house."

"I know he is not."

"Ola, are you very anxious to find the sacred relic?"

The woman answered in an energetic tone:

"It is the dream of my life."

"If you will aid me to find Charles, I will find the gem."

"Ah! you speak like one who knows just what she is saying."

"I will make good my promise."

"Did you find something in that room?"

Alice made no answer.

The Indian woman exhibited signs of great excitement.

"You shall tell me what you found."

"I shall tell you nothing unless you aid me to find Charles."

Ola seized hold of Alice, and the woman produced a gleaming knife, a peculiarly shaped weapon; and a maniacal light gleamed in her eyes as she said in a husky voice:

"Will you speak, or die?"

"You may kill me, but I will not speak."

"Be warned! I am mad! I can not restrain myself! I am your friend; but when you withhold from me the great secret, you make me your foe!"

Alice stood calm, pale, and firm. She was determined to make the most of the great secret, even at the risk of her life. She had become really convinced that Ola held the secret of the place where Charles was confined, and stood at defiance.

Ola became more and more excited, and she trembled from head to foot as again she demanded:

"Will you speak and tell me?"

"I will tell you nothing!"

"Then die!"

The woman was beside herself, and she, in her passion, meant murder; but her descending arm was caught in a firm grasp.

Alca mysteriously appeared upon the scene, and interfered in time to save the life of Alice.

The woman, in her fury, turned upon the Indian youth, but the latter was as quick and agile as a monkey. He avoided the murderous thrusts of the knife, and at length succeeded in again catching hold of Ola's arm, which he had released at the moment he arrested the blow intended for Alice.

A sharp exchange of words passed between Ola and the Indian. "You have interfered with me, Alca. You have won my enmity now, and I will break my promise."

"Never! you dare not!" said Alca.

"Aha! Now I will tell you the truth. Wadji suspected you. I only went away at his command, to test your loyalty."

Alca turned to Alice, and said:

"Go out of the room."

It was a strange request to come from the Indian boy, but Alice obeyed. A sudden resolution entered her mind. She started to go toward the door, when Ola sprang between her and it, exclaiming:

"You shall not go! Alice, do not for one moment believe that I would have harmed you. I only meant to frighten you, and when Alca has gone I will explain my violence; but I would not have harmed you."

Alca came to Alice, and bending close, said:

"Do not trust her."

Alice tried to leave the room. Ola reached forth her arms to seize the girl, but Alca intervened, when the woman turned on the boy like a wild cat.

A desperate struggle followed; it became a regular fight, similar to a combat between two wild animals.

Alca plunged a knife into the bosom of the furious woman. Ola shrieked and fell dying to the floor.

Alice was frozen with horror. It was the first tragedy she had ever witnessed.

The girl would have left the room, would have fled from the ghastly sight, but her limbs were paralyzed.

The fair girl wished that she were once outside the house; but, alas! she was soon to learn that she had only escaped one peril to meet a greater one—indeed, a peril to which death, was nothing.

"She is dead!" muttered Alca.

"Why did you kill Ola?"

"She would have killed you. She was mad!"

Alice moved toward the door with her hands covering her face, as though the sight blasted her vision.

She hoped to get outside the door, when she would run for her life; but her progress was checked. From the lips of the Indian boy came the ominous words:

"You must not go; you must stay and listen to Alca!"

Alice had an idea as to what the subject of the fierce boy's communication would be, and her soul was filled with horror. The girl's face evidently betrayed her wild alarm, as the Indian boy said:

"I will do you no harm. I love you. I am a prince. Come; we will flee from this place. You shall go with me to my native land, and have gold and gems and slaves—everything that is beautiful."

Alice thought of a scheme, and she said:

"I can not listen to Alca in the presence of the dead. Remove the body of Ola."

"I will lead Alice to another room. Come," said Alca.

The lad approached the girl, and suddenly, with the quickness of lightning, threw her to the floor. The deed was done so quickly, Alice was powerless to make the least resistance.

From his pocket he had drawn a cord, and rapidly and deftly he had tied the poor girl's hands together, and her feet also.

The girl was helpless—powerless in his grasp; and oh! how she wished at that moment that she could have changed places with poor Ola, whose face was fast assuming the rigidity of death!

Alca saw the look of horror upon the girl's face, and said:

"You need have no fear; Alca will not harm you. I only make sure that I can deliver you into the hands of Wadji."

The girl felt a slight sense of relief upon hearing the Indian boy's declaration, and her confidence increased when she saw him raise the ghastly form of Ola in his arms, and carry it from the room.

In a few moments he returned, and raising Alice from the floor, he placed her upon the sofa.

At length Alca spoke. He said:

"You are in my power, and I am in your power."

"How are you in my power?" Alice ventured to ask.

"Wadji left you in my charge; my life was to answer for your safety. I betrayed my trust. You can tell Wadji, and he will kill me. There is only one way I can save myself; I must silence you as I have silenced Ola, or you must make me a promise. You must tell him Ola was false; that Ola was taking you from this house; that I came to the rescue; that Ola attempted to kill me, and that I killed Ola."

"And if I refuse?"

"I will kill you!"

"I will promise to remain silent."

"Enough! I will trust your word."

Alca went to where he had placed the body of Ola. He raised the ghastly corpse in his arms and carried it away.

It would be hard to conceive a more terrible position. Alice was bound hand and foot. She had already passed through unheard-of horrors, and she dared not scream; and so the hours passed until long after midnight.

At length Alice became conscious of the presence of some one in the room, and her heart stood still.

A moment passed, and there came a voice, saying:

"Who is here?"

It was the voice of Wadji.

"I am here," returned Alice.

"Where is Alca?"

"I know not."

"You have not retired?"

"I am lying on the sofa, bound hand and foot."

The doctor uttered an exclamation of surprise, when Alice said:

"Strike a light."

The doctor found a lamp and matches, and as soon as the light was shed abroad in the room his eyes rested upon Alice.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"There has been a terrible time in the house since you left."

"Who bound you?"

"Alca."

"Why did he bind you?"

"You must ask him."

"Where is Ola?"

"She is dead."

"Dead!" ejaculated the doctor. "Who killed her?"

"Ask Alca."

"Alice," he said, "I wish you would tell me all that has occurred."

"Please release me, doctor. You have always pretended to be my friend."

"I am your friend, my poor child, and I will prove myself your friend."

The doctor advanced to the couch, and drawing a knife, cut the cords binding her wrists. In doing so he made a slight incision, seemingly by accident, from which the blood flowed.

"Poor child! how awkward of me! but I am also myself terribly nervous. I must repair my error. I have something here that will stop the flow of blood. It is but a slight cut, my child."

Indeed, the doctor did have something to stop the flow of blood—to stop its flow forever. He had but to apply one drop of the drug to the wound, and the blood would stop its flow—stop from pulsating round that agitated heart.

The wound had been intentional; it was a part of the terrible man's murder plan.

The doctor placed a tiny vial on the window-sill and pretended to examine the wound; then he said:

"I will soon fix it."

The doctor removed the cork from the vial and carried the fatal drug toward the wounded arm. A moment and all would have been over, the deed would have been done; but at that critical moment there came an unlooked-for interruption. A stern-faced man entered the room, leaped forward, and dashed the vial from the doctor's hand.

The girl's life was saved. The wonderful detective had arrived just in time. One second later and he would have been too late.

The doctor cowered with the look of a condemned soul, as pictured on the canvas of the great masters, while Sleuth stood calm, triumphant, but with a terrible look upon his face, and a vengeful gleam in his glorious eyes.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TURNING to Alice, the detective said:

"Miss Fairfax, you need have no fear now. I have run this miserable assassin to a dead close in, and he will now face the consequences of his crimes."

The doctor spoke:

"You seem to have confidence in this young lady."

"I have."

"Then she will bear witness to the fact that I am the savior of her life. Her relatives would have murdered her. I saved her life; you know that yourself."

"Doctor, what was in that bottle I dashed from your hand?"

"I accidentally cut the young lady's hand. I intended to stop the flow of blood with its contents."

"Doctor, listen to me: there lies the vial. I will make an incision in your arm, and apply a drop of that liquid. If it stops the flow of blood harmlessly, I will forgive all your crimes—I will do more; I will reward you munificently for your services to Miss Fairfax."

"To what amount?"

Sleuth hesitated a moment. He was satisfied as to the real character of the liquid, but the doctor might fool him after all. He might practice some legerdemain, or he might inject some antidote.

"Come, you promised me a reward; you offered me the chance of an ordeal."

"You appear anxious to undergo the ordeal."

"I am; you have made a certain charge against me in the presence of Miss Fairfax. Now listen: I will make an incision in my arm; you shall apply the liquid or stand a foul defamer of an honorable man!"

The doctor drew a knife and made a slight incision in his arm, from which the blood flowed slowly.

The expression on the man's face was terrible as he presented the bleeding arm to Sleuth, and said:

"There—there! Apply the test!"

Sleuth hesitated.

"Apply the test yourself. I'll not handle the vial. I dare you to drop the liquid upon the wound!"

"And I dare you to make good your words, or confess yourself a liar!"

"I'll not be dared," said Sleuth. "If it is harmless, all the better for you; I wronged you."

The detective seized the vial. The doctor's face was livid.

Sleuth reached forth his hand, and the doctor withdrew his arm.

At the same instant a knife cut the air, and the treacherous blade would have pierced the heart of a less experienced man than the veteran. Sleuth had anticipated the game, as usual; the veteran was always on his guard, and he avoided the thrust.

"You scoundrel!" he exclaimed; "you are the assassin I called you!"

The doctor drew back, and said, coolly:

"I merely intended to pay you for your insults. I will still prove you a liar. Give me the vial."

Sleuth laid the vial down. The doctor smiled grimly, and taking the vial, poured one drop on the bleeding wound, and the next instant he fell to the floor a corpse.

Alice uttered a shrill scream of terror, while Sleuth stood calm and cold, and muttered:

"'Tis better so!"

Alice had passed through so many scenes of horror that she speedily regained her composure.

"Miss Fairfax, it has been a long trail, but you are found and saved at last," said Sleuth.

"Who are you, sir?"

"I am a detective. I have been upon that man's track ever since the night you were laid in the coffin."

"It is all as a terrible dream to me, sir. Can you tell me all that has occurred? why I am here? why that man would have murdered me? Will you tell me?"

"I will," answered the detective.

When the detective's narrative was concluded, he demanded that the girl should tell him all that had befallen her.

Alice told her wonderful and thrilling tale, and when she had concluded, the detective remarked:

"It hardly seems possible that such incidents could transpire in the nineteenth century. But, my dear Miss Fairfax, there are more horrors in progress, more crimes being committed, more mysteries existing at this present moment than the pens of all the novelists who have ever lived have put upon their imagination-supplied pages."

Alice then told Sleuth of the shrieks she had heard, and they confirmed his belief that Charles was a prisoner in that house. He then began a careful search of the grounds, and while crawling across a circular space of sward, he discovered a little revolving ventilator.

The detective went away, but soon returned with a shovel, and he commenced to dig around the ventilator. His excavating was rewarded by a find.

Sleuth continued his digging and soon uncovered the manhole of a cistern; and after a little prying he managed to pry off the covering, and thrusting his head down, he encountered a sight which caused him to do an unusual thing—utter an oath!

The detective saw a human being at the bottom of the well. The place had been utilized as a prison, and one glance was sufficient to prove that a prisoner was there and that he lived, for the chained man moved.

The detective went away to the barn and secured a ladder, and carrying it to the opening, he thrust it down and started to descend, when there came a feeble voice, exclaiming:

"Am I saved?"

Tears were in the eyes of the detective as he called back:

"Yes, you are saved!"

Words of thankfulness fell from the lips of the poor object, and a moment later our hero stood beside the prisoner, and asked:

"Who are you?"

"My name is Charles Alexander Brutone. Who are you?"

"I am a friend."

The prisoner was silent a moment, and, strangely enough, Sleuth had not made any effort to release him.

"Do you know my cousin Miss Alice Fairfax?"

"Yes; and she is true to you."

"Do you know who my enemy is? Do you know why I was placed here?"

"Have you no suspicion yourself?"

"None whatever. I did not know that I had an enemy in the world, unless—"

The young man hesitated.

"Is my cousin my friend?" demanded the youth.

"Let me tell you that your cousin is a true and faithful friend; and as you have suffered, so has she suffered; as you have endured peril, so she has encountered peril also."

"And who is our enemy?"

"At some future time you shall hear the whole story. And now let me tell you that you must remain here a short time longer."

The detective did not dare release the youth, for fear he would rush right from the place and exhibit himself, and after his long confinement, he presented a horribly haggard appearance.

The detective ascended from the strange prison, proceeded to the room where Alice and the detective, Andy, awaited, and asked:

"Miss Fairfax, I suppose you are anxious to leave this place?"

"I am."

"You shall do so at once, provided you have the necessary clothing."

The girl blushed, and admitted that she had no street apparel.

Sleuth thought a moment, and then gave certain orders to his pal, and the latter disappeared.

Two hours passed.

Sleuth remained talking with Alice, and at the expiration of the time named, a carriage was driven in front of the house.

Two gentlemen alighted. One was the detective, and the other a stranger, who subsequently proved to be the district attorney.

Andy carried a large bundle into the house, and Alice was put in possession of wearing apparel.

Sleuth had sent a note to Sara Bindal, and the clothing came in response.

Alice was speedily robed, and entered the carriage with Andy, under the instructions of her rescuer.

Sleuth meantime remained, and a thrilling tale was unfolded.

He told the gentleman who had returned with Andy a long and thrilling story, and then led him to the cistern prison cell where Charles Brutone awaited release.

Our hero released the youth and led him into the house, and then a strange tale was unfolded.

The detective related to the young man all that had occurred, and it was indeed a marvelous narrative.

The young man, in turn, told his own experience, and his story was equally thrilling.

"I received a note," he said, "just before my disappearance, from a lady. She requested to meet me at a certain point, and in the note informed me that she had a most startling revelation to make. I met the young lady, who proved to be Parthenia, one of the Bindal servants. She told me a terrible tale—how George Bindal had worked upon the fancy of my cousin Alice. She told me that Alice believed me to be false, and conspiring to take her life. She agreed to meet me on the following evening, and take me to a place where I would have ocular proofs of the truth of her statements. I met her at the hour named upon the following evening. We took a carriage and were driven, as I suppose, to this house. One thing is certain: some time during the journey I was made unconscious, and when I returned to consciousness I was a prisoner in darkness, and there I remained until you, sir, released me to-day."

Sleuth could not discern the motive Wadji had in sparing the young man's life, unless it was to have a sure ground to fall back on in case anything should happen to Alice.

The detective said:

"Did you ever see Wadji while you were a prisoner?"

"I never did."

"Was your attendant the Indian boy?"

"Yes."

"How long since you saw him?"

"I can not tell. As I said, it was one long night to me all the time I was a prisoner in that place."

Certain explanations passed between Sleuth and the man who had returned in the carriage, and the events that followed have nothing directly to do with our narrative.

The suicide of Wadji was established, and later on his body was claimed by a man who professed to be his friend, and who, as it proved, established a relationship in time sufficient to inherit the doctor's personal effects, which were his whole estate.

We will here also state that two bodies were found in the Schuylkill River. The bodies were those of the murdered Ola, and Alca, the suicide.

Sleuth, later on, in thinking over the matter, was convinced that the Indian had sought death rather than face the vengeance of his weird master, the doctor.

The detective had accomplished his mission, and he took Charles Brutone to the city.

Upon the day following the incidents described, Sleuth met Alice Fairfax.

The girl did indeed look beautiful as she thanked the detective for all his kindness. She had heard the whole story, and indeed her gratitude was great.

The detective proceeded to the Brutone mansion. He arrived just in time. The brother and sister had made all their arrangements to depart.

"You will not stop and see the cousins?" said Sleuth.

"No." The answer came from Sara Bindal.

"Where do you go?"

"To New York. Where is Wadji?" asked Sara.

"Death closed in on him, and the grave will be his prison."

The woman turned pale. It is a singular fact that murderers will blanch in the presence of death which comes through the will of Providence.

George Bindal and his sister went away, and Sleuth took possession of the house. The detective went to the place where Alice had been under the guardianship of Andy, and informed her that the hour had come for her to take formal possession of her home.

The girl had made inquiries concerning her cousin, but Sleuth had assured her that he was safe and well.

"I fear you are deceiving me," said the girl; and for the first time during all the terrible scenes through which she had passed, she burst into a flood of tears.

While she was yet weeping, a carriage stopped at the door, and a moment later a pale, handsome young man, elegantly dressed, entered the room.

"Alice!" "Charles!" came the cries; and the two were clasped in each other's arms.

Sleuth and his pal withdrew. The cousins had much to say to each other, and for two hours they were left alone.

At the expiration of the time mentioned, Sleuth was summoned into the room, and Charles Brutone said:

"My noble friend, it is all right."

Sleuth had advised an immediate marriage, and that was what Charles meant when he said it was all right.

Within the hour they were married, and Sleuth's work was done.

We have only to add that the matter of the estate was easily settled. There was no question as to the intent of the will, and a month subsequent to the marriage, when the detective paid a visit to Philadelphia, he found matters all satisfactorily arranged, and Mr. and Mrs. Brutone in full and happy possession of the vast fortune which had been bequeathed to them.